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Inequities, Resistance, and Motivations in Latin@ Teacher Trajectories: Implications For Latin@ Teacher Recruitment and Retention From A Testimonio-Based Study

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Running head: LATINA TEACHERS' *TESTIMONIOS*

INEQUITIES, RESISTANCE, AND MOTIVATIONS IN LATIN@ TEACHER
TRAJECTORIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR LATIN@ TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION FROM A *TESTIMONIO*-BASED STUDY

A DISSERTATION

Submitted by

CARLA C. BOROVICKA

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Lesley University
May 16, 2015

INEQUITIES, RESISTANCE, AND MOTIVATIONS IN LATIN@ TEACHER
TRAJECTORIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR LATIN@ TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION FROM A TESTIMONIO-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

The demographics of Oregon's teacher workforce do not reflect the student population. The most noticeable gap exists between Latin@ students and Latin@ teachers. The purpose of this *testimonio* study was to explore perceptions of the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in Oregon K–12 rural schools situated in new Latin@ diaspora communities. The researcher wished to ensure that sociohistorical and sociopolitical events as well as the lived experiences help to inform the understanding of the underrepresentation of Latin@ teachers in Oregon. A purposefully selected participant sample comprised nine Latina educators who worked in primarily rural Oregon schools. The primary data collection method was *testimonio* interviews, a method that collects spoken accounts of oppression and resistance; document review, researchers journaling, and a participant demographic data survey were also used. Critical Race Theory, Latina Critical Race Theory, and Community Cultural Wealth frameworks were used as analytical lenses. The analysis and interpretation of finding were organized using three analytic categories (a) educational inequities, (b) personal wounding, (c) personal healing. This research revealed that educational inequities and personal wounding were structural and systematic forces that negatively impacted Latina teachers at all phases of the teacher trajectory. Counternarratives highlight Latina teachers' resistance and resilience as fueling their motivations to teach and their persistence. The data disrupt dominant discourses and ideologies that perpetuate the insufficient diversity in the teacher workforce, and blame Latin@s for their own disparity in representation. Recommendations include an action plan for university–school–community partnerships to improve the number of Latin@ teachers in the teacher workforce, educational policy leaders, and for the field of adult learning.

Keywords: Latina teachers, *testimonio*, Latina/o critical race theory, teacher recruitment and retention, transformative learning

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter Azza and my son Khiseth.

I love you, and I am so fortunate to be your mother.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation journey has not been traveled alone but with so many others, and I am grateful for the support I have received along the way. Thank you to the participants in the present study; your willingness to share your time and stories made this study possible. Thank you to my committee members, Judith B. Cohen, PhD, Maria de Lourdes Serpa, EdD, and Surendra Subramani, PhD—it was a privilege to have your experience, knowledge, and wisdom to guide me through this study. I appreciate all you have done for me.

To my family, I am so fortunate to have you in my life. Thank you for your patience, encouragement, and support while I pursued this research. In memory, I would like to thank my mother Georgia Louise Borovicka and my father Robert Louis Borovicka; you gave me the gift of life, a love of learning, and the willpower to pursue my goals.

The opportunity to complete this program and dissertation was a privilege that I hope will benefit others, particularly people who have counterstories to tell that speak for justice.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This *testimonio* study sought to understand Latina teachers' trajectories, as well as their persistence in the teaching profession. The limited scholarship on Latina teachers is primarily situated within the context of the Southwestern region of the United States (US) (Alfaro, 2014; Flores, 2014; Valenciana, Weisman, Flores, 2006) or in urban schools (Irizarry, 2012), and rarely explores the lived experiences of Latina teachers working in rural schools (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006). This gap is especially true for non-traditional Latin@ settlements, i.e., the new Latin@ diaspora (Camayd-Freixas, Karush, Koenig, Nemon, & Vasquez, 2007; Hamann & Harklau, 2010; Murillo & Villenas, 1997) which includes Oregon. Moreover, there is a gap in the research on the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in the new Latin@ diasporic context of rural Oregon communities (Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005; Wenger, Dinsmore, & Villagomez, 2012), despite the growing statewide disparity between Latin@ students and Latin@ teachers (Oregon Department of Education, Statewide Report Card, 2014). This disparity represents the most notable gap between the demographics of Oregon's teacher workforce and student population (Oregon Department of Education, Minority Teacher Act Status Report, 2014). At present, the voices of Latina teachers who work outside of Oregon's major cities—cities that have historically hosted the largest Latin@ settlements (Hamann & Harklau, 2010)—are missing from the literature on the statewide teacher diversity gap. The purpose of this *testimonio* study is to listen to, understand, and document the oral stories of Latina teachers' educational trajectories and teaching experiences in a time of national ethnic demographic change. This change is impacting communities and schools in the western states more rapidly than other regions in the US (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2012), and has highlighted the urgent need to increase the number of effective highly-qualified and culturally sensitive Latin@ teachers and bilingual educators (Oregon Department of Education, Equity Plan, 2012). This

research should help to expose educational inequities and implicit bias, as well as highlight motivations and supports for Latina teachers. Understanding these societal and school injustices, as well as “sustaining features” (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006, p. 13), has the goal of informing university–school–community partnerships. This would allow these partnerships to attract, recruit, prepare, and retain Latina teachers; call for educational equity; and ultimately improve the experiences and outcomes of each and every student, especially in new Latin@ diaspora communities. A transformative narrative *testimonio* methodology was used to explore the participants’ experiences navigating majority-culture schools and primarily white higher education institutions as sites of historical injustices. Critical Race Theory and Latina Critical Race Theory, as well as a Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) model were used as analytic lenses to identify themes of oppression, resistance, and resiliency. The participants’ *testimonios* were then used to construct counter-stories to dominant ideologies and practices, and to serve as a call for social justice. The present study’s participants included a purposefully selected group of nine experienced Latina educators who held bachelors degrees or above, and who taught in predominantly rural central and eastern Oregon PK–12 schools.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the background and context. Following this is a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and research questions. This chapter also includes a discussion of the research approach, researcher assumptions, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of study limitations and definitions of key terminology.

Background and Context

Although well-established Mexican-origin communities have been present in the Northwestern region of the United States (i.e., Oregon, Washington, Idaho) since the 1940s, Oregon has experienced rapid demographic growth in the Latin@ population over the last two decades (Camayd-Freixas, et al., 2007; Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Annual Report, 2007 and 2008; Pew Hispanic Center, 2010). The state's public school systems are the most visible representation of this demographic shift, as contemporary migration and immigration have brought an influx of Latin@ families with children. This influx of families has replaced historical patterns of Mexican labor recruitment, which had for a long time mainly comprised single male residents (Garcia & Garcia, 2005; Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 2009 Annual Report). As of 2014, Latin@ students (primarily of Mexican origin) comprise 22.4% (Oregon Department of Education, Student Ethnicity, 2014) of all Oregon's K–12 public school students. Projected population changes indicate that Latin@ students will comprise 28% of Oregon's public school population by the year 2020, and Latin@ students currently represent the fastest growing portion of the state's student population (Oregon Department of Education, Statewide Report Card, 2011/2014). This growth is not evenly distributed through out the state, with 10 districts (all situated in urban areas) of Oregon's 213 school districts enrolling 50% of the state's Latin@ students (ECONorthwest, 2009). However, a growing number of Oregon's rural school districts have Latin@ student enrollment that exceeds 50% of total enrollments (ECONorthwest, 2009). In the central and eastern Oregon regions, where the present study takes place, five eastern Oregon school districts report that their student bodies are majority Latin@ and one central Oregon district reports that students of color make up 70% of their student body (Oregon Department of Education, Student Ethnicity, 2014).

Important factors in the present study's context are that educational attainment rates in Oregon's urban areas are significantly greater than those of Oregon's rural regions (Crandall & Weber, 2005; Oregon Department of Education, Statewide Report Card, 2011). In addition, Latin@ Oregonians are reported to have the lowest levels of educational attainment for any group of students of color in the state (Oregon University System, Educational Attainment, 2011). The Latin@ student population has historically faced significant challenges to educational access, and success has varied widely based on their family background. One factor that has historically challenged Latin@ students' access to education has been the need to support their families (Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Annual Report, 2009). As compared to their white peers, Latin@ youth are more than twice as likely to live in poverty, have less access to high-quality and culturally relevant early childhood education, tend to be taught by inexperienced teachers, move schools often, attend underfunded and highly segregated schools, and experience higher rates of school discipline (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Latin@ students in Oregon are among those who are least likely to graduate from high school on time and attend college (Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 2009), placing them at a severe disadvantage in terms of future educational attainment, employment, and contribution to Oregon's workforce economy (ECONorthwest, 2009; Oregon University System, 2012), especially the teacher workforce.

Studies indicate that students of color benefit from having effective teachers of color with whom they and their families can identify based on common knowledge and experiences (Easton-Brooks, 2013; Irizarry, 2012; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; US Department of Education, 2011). The research suggests that teachers of color who are willing to share their lived experiences as students of color, their college-going process, and their understanding of the

sociopolitical conditions of their students are an important means for enhancing educational experiences and outcomes for students of color (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Burstein & Montano, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004; US Department of Education, 2011; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Weisman, Flores & Valenciana, 2007). Additionally, the presence of teachers of color has been reported to reduce the representation of ethnic minority students in special education, reduce absenteeism, improve parental and student involvement in school activities, and contribute to the academic achievement of all students (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Villegas, Storm, & Lucas, 2012; White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2014). These benefits to students and the positive impact of a diverse workforce on organizational effectiveness (Milem, 2003) jointly support the US Department of Education's educational mission to prepare every student for participation in a global society (US Department of Education, 2011).

The rapid change in Oregon's Latin@ student demographics and the number of Spanish-speaking students has heightened the importance of having an effective, highly qualified teaching workforce that reflects the student population (Oregon Department of Education, Minority Teacher Act Status Report, 2014). The state is concerned that the increased number of students of color in Oregon schools has not been matched by a change in the teacher population. As of 2012, only 8.3% of Oregon's teaching force is of color, while students of color comprise 35.3% of total enrollment (Oregon Department of Education, Minority Teacher Act, 2014). The gap is greatest between Latin@ students (who comprise 22% of the student population) and Latin@ teachers (who comprise only 3.6% of the teacher workforce).

The gap between student and teacher demographics is not new, and was addressed in 1991 by the Oregon Teacher Minority Act. This legislative act established a goal "that by the

year 2001 the number of minority teachers, including administrators, employed by school districts and education service districts shall be approximately proportionate to the number of minority children enrolled in the public schools of this state” (Oregon University System, Minority Teacher Act Report, 2011, p. 3). The act called on the collaborative efforts of the Oregon Department of Community Colleges & Workforce Development, the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon University System, and the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. These bodies were to gather data and to report biennially to the Legislative Assembly regarding minority representation within Oregon’s public postsecondary education system, public teacher preparation programs, educators receiving Oregon licensure, and the public K–12 workforce (Oregon University System, Minority Teacher Act Report, 2011). The Minority Teacher Act’s call for parity representation by the year 2001 was, however, not met, nor was there compliance with the request for biennial reporting. In fact, between 2001 and 2011 the discrepancy in the proportion of ethnic minority teachers and students grew from 15.2% to 27.26%. This gap only continued to grow, and by 2014, Oregon’s K–12 students of color comprised 36% of the total student body (Oregon Department of Education, Student Enrollment, 2014). In an effort to address these ongoing parity concerns—which have been fueled in part, by the continuing growth in the Latin@ student population (Oregon Department of Education, Equity Plan, 2012)—Oregon Senate Bill 755, which was enacted during the 2013 Legislative Session, amended the definition of *minority* to include educators whose first language is not English. The bill also created the new goal that, between July 2, 2012 and July 1, 2015 there would be a 10% increase in the percentage of (a) minority teacher candidates graduating from Oregon’s public educator preparation programs, (b) culturally and linguistically diverse administrators employed by school districts and education service districts, and (c)

culturally and linguistically diverse teachers employed by school districts and education service districts. To support the achievement of the revised goals for the Minority Teacher Act, the Oregon Education Investment Board's Network for Quality Teaching and Learning awarded partnership grants that "focused specifically on recruitment, preparation, and retention activities that can result in more culturally and linguistically diverse educators" (Oregon Department of Education, Minority Teacher Act Status Report, 2014, p. 28) (also see Oregon Department of Education, Pipeline Models Grant, 2013). These activities target middle school and high school students, undergraduate college students, career changers, and educational assistants.

A 2014 status report on the new goals for the Minority Teacher Act reported that the state was on track to meet the 2015 goals for increasing the percentage of minority teacher candidates and culturally and linguistically diverse administrators; however, the state was not on track to meet the goal of increasing the percentage of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers (Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Minority Teacher Status Report, 2014).

The urgency of addressing the growing disparity between the nation's diverse student population (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2012) and the predominantly European-American teacher workforce (Goldring & Bitterman, 2013) has been linked to the academic achievement gap, and has been framed by some as a civil rights issue (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry, 2012; United States Department of Education, 2011). In both Oregon and across the US, an urgent need has been expressed to increase overall educational attainment, as more and more jobs require advanced education, (Lumina Foundation, n.d.; Oregon University System, 2012). In 2011, the Oregon Legislature approved the "40-40-20" educational attainment goal; i.e. "40% of adult Oregonians to hold a bachelor's or advanced degree, 40% to hold an associates degree or meaningful postsecondary certificate, and all Oregonians to hold a high

school diploma or equivalent by the year 2025” (Oregon University System, 2012). Critics worry that the failure to address the educational needs of a large portion of the state’s population will result in a growing underclass, and will change the socioeconomic fabric of Oregon for the worse (Chalkboard Project, 2012; Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 2008; Oregon University System, 2012).

Diversifying the teacher workforce will support the needs of the growing population of Latin@ school-age students (Irizarry, 2011; Villegas & Irvine, 2010) and will benefit learning experiences and outcomes for all students (Birenda & Chait, 2001, National Education Association, Teacher Recruitment, 2012; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004; US Department of Education, 2011). The majority of teachers are women (Goldring, & Bitterman, 2013, 2011). Students’ academic achievement is reported to increase as a function of their mothers’ education across all ethnic groups (Gándara & Contreras, 2009) and a study of academically successful Latin@ students reported that Latina mothers’ tradition of story telling conveys “messages of hope, pride, and ambition drawn from stories of family and ancestors successful lives; true or fantastical” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 208) a significant factor in shaping life chances. Moreover, Latinas are increasingly graduating from high school and attending college (Fry & Taylor, 2013; Fry & Lopez, 2012), and by 2050 women of Mexican origin—who already represent the largest ethnic minority group of girls in the US—are projected to comprise 8% of the total US population (Cuádras, 2005; Gándara, 2015; Ginorio & Huston, 2001). This growing number of, specifically, Latinas in the US makes it important to learn more about how Latina teachers describe their experiences in education, their trajectories in the teacher workforce, their role in student outcomes, the factors that support or challenge their persistence in the profession, and their perspectives on improving the numbers of well prepared Latina teachers in Oregon K–

12 classrooms. Therefore, this study seeks to highlight the structural and systematic factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of Latina teachers and the supports that keep them teaching in rural Oregon schools.

Statement of the Problem

Oregon's population, and in turn the student population, has grown more diverse; however, the teaching force has remained relatively white and homogenous. The most noticeable diversity gap exists between Latin@ students and Latin@ teachers. This persistent teacher diversity gap has been linked to the academic achievement gap (Easton-Brooks, 2013; Villegas & Irvine, 2010), which researchers argue inhibits the number of future teachers of color (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). However, little is known about why the underrepresentation of Latina teachers, in particular, occurs.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this *testimonio* study was to explore the perceptions of the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in Oregon K–12 rural schools, with the help of a participant sample of nine Latina educators. The researcher anticipated that through a better understanding of these participants' experiences in education, their trajectories into the teacher workforce, their role in student experiences and outcomes, the factors that support or challenge their persistence in the profession, and their perspectives on improving the numbers of well prepared Latina teachers, research-based decisions can be made to address educational equity and inform university–school–community partnerships, with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of Latin@ teachers in Oregon's rural K-12 schools.

The research questions were:

1. What had the greatest impact on Latina teachers' educational experiences?
2. How do Latina teachers make meaning of their decision to enter and persist in the teaching profession?
3. What are Latina teachers' perceptions of the role they play in students' educational experiences and outcomes?
4. What can Latina teachers tell educational leaders about the recruitment, preparation, and retention of Latina teachers in rural Oregon?

Research Approach

To study the experiences and perceptions of nine Latina teachers and advance social justice recommendations for addressing the phenomenon under investigation, the researcher used a qualitative Latina critical race theory approach (LatCrit) (Solozano & Yosso, 2001). A *testimonio* methodology was employed, which included gathering in-depth oral stories to document and expose specific and local injustices experienced by racialized individuals in connection with group or class situations marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle (Beverly, 2004). This methodology was chosen as it aligned with the study's transformative paradigm, confirmed the subjective and political nature of the research problem and questions, provided a culturally relevant framework for the researcher– participant relationship, and made use of a collaborative method of analysis.

The data collected from the oral *testimonios* were the primary source of evidence informing the findings of this qualitative study. The study protocol was developed using three pilot *testimonio* interviews. With the approval of the University's institutional review board, individual *testimonio* interviews were conducted, followed by member checks, and a second

interview. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. To support the findings, participants collaborated with the researcher through all stages of the study by identifying additional potential participants (*snowball sampling technique*; Patton, 2002), refining the interview guide, and providing personal demographic data and artifacts that added to the rich details of their *testimonios*.

Data analysis was an iterative process. The coding categories and emerging themes were informed by the study's conceptual framework, ongoing discussions with the present study's participants, and the researcher's journal reflections. Additionally, a review of the literature on the sociohistorical and sociopolitical context of Latin@ education, cultural theories, and adult learning supported the first phase of data analysis. The second phase used three theoretical frameworks as lenses for understanding the research findings: critical race theory, Latin@ critical race theory, and the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) model together formed an analytic framework for naming injustices and writing counter-stories of success. Finally, the participants were contacted approximately one-and-a-half years after the initial *testimonio* interviews. The researcher and participants discussed the study findings and implications, and participants were asked to note any institutional changes they might have observed in their current teaching positions. These follow-up discussions provided validation of research findings and informed the research recommendations.

Assumptions

While a transformative paradigm and critical theoretical frameworks guided how the research for the present study was conducted, a social justice focus influenced this researcher's interpretation of the data. Based on this researcher's commitment to advocating for an action agenda for equity, personal experience and professional background in higher education

leadership and teacher education, as well as the review of the relevant literature, and pilot study results, the following assumptions informed this study:

(1) Multiple stakeholder voices and collaborative participation are needed to holistically address the Latin@ student–teacher gap. A critical perspective guided this assumption that research is political and that educational reform requires political debate (dialogic) and discussion (dialogue) to advance social change. These discussions must include those disenfranchised by the primarily white monolingual educator workforce, especially in new Latin@ diaspora communities.

(2) University-driven teacher recruitment and retention initiatives aimed at historically underrepresented students will not, on their own, improve the number of effective highly qualified Latina teachers. This assumption is based on a LatCrit framework, which posits that the intersectionality of race and racism with multiple identity factors unfairly impact Latinas in US society. This supposition is drawn from a strengths-based perspective that highlights the resistance and resiliency strategies that Latin@s draw from their communities, which are essential to their motivation to enter and persist in the teacher trajectory.

(3) Culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and school and community anti-bias initiatives are needed at all phases of the teacher trajectory. This assumption is based on sociocultural theories that support a complex understanding of culture, beyond race and ethnicity, as a precursor to creating welcoming and inclusive schools and learning environments that attract and retain Latina teachers.

(4) Latina teachers who have developed a strong ethnic identity, a critical perspective, and supportive social networks are, overall, committed to serving their students and communities through teaching. This assumption is based on transformative learning theories that encourage

the critical interrogation of systematic and structural inequities in education and that empower Latina teachers in their capacity as professional educators.

Researcher and Reflexivity

When the present study began, this researcher was employed in the field of higher education administration as the Northwest Regional Director for teacher education programs located in six western US states. One of the primary responsibilities of this position was designing and implementing a recruitment plan for diversifying the pool of candidates for a Bachelor of Arts teacher preparation program. This teacher preparation program was located in western Washington state, and recruitment activities were held in urban and rural locations. The discourse around the challenges of recruiting culturally and linguistically diverse prospective teachers explicitly drew on deficit perspectives. However, this researcher worked within communities of color and often met with prospective teachers of color who provided a counterstory to the dominant perspectives on the teacher diversity gap. These professional experiences and field observations contributed to this researcher's interest in learning more about the teacher trajectory of teachers of color, particularly Latina teachers working in rural schools in Oregon and Washington.

This researcher holds a Bachelor of Science in Multinational Business, with a minor in Spanish language and culture; a Master of Science in Educational Policy and Management; and an Oregon teaching certification. Prior to working in teacher education, this researcher was employed as a community college center director in rural central Oregon. This researcher has had over twenty years of experience in educational administration working in rural communities that have limited access to higher education, and that have primarily white, Eurocentric educators. These experiences have shaped this researcher's transformative worldview, and have

promoted an interest in advocacy research; both of these personal biases were explicitly acknowledged at the onset of the present study.

This researcher acknowledges that personal experiences, as well as educational, and professional backgrounds, have influenced the research design of the present study. This researcher has remained committed to ongoing critical self-reflection by way of journaling, as well as through dialogue with professional colleagues, teacher educators, school teachers, and with the dissertation committee. Finally, a triangulation of data sources and methods, as well as ongoing collaboration with the participants, were employed to address bias.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for this study comes from the researchers goal of centering Latina teachers' voices and cultural intuition within the discourse on improving the number of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers. Addressing the teacher diversity gap is an essential component of meeting the diverse needs of each and every student, in particular Latin@ students, whose strengths are often missed, misunderstood, and marginalized (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Without addressing the teacher diversity gap, the efforts of university–school–community partnerships aimed at reforming teacher preparation and professional development will have limited effectiveness in closing the achievement gap, especially for a growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

This present study's depth, despite its small number of participants, significantly extends the current knowledge on Latina teachers' educational experiences, trajectories, and persistence in the teacher workforce. In addition, this study contributes to the literature on teacher education, providing practical recommendations for improving the educational experiences of Latin@ students. Although culturally responsive pre-service and in-service training and professional

development are needed for all teachers, this study advocates placing the community cultural wealth of Latina teachers in the foreground; learning more about the experiences of Latina teachers has the potential to attract, prepare, and retain greater numbers of effective high-quality teachers (*maestras*).

Definition of Key Terminology

1. *Latina* in the present study, refers to a woman of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American origin; this term can also refer to a woman of any other Spanish-speaking culture or origin, regardless of her race (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011).

Latino similarly refers to a man of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American origin; this term can also refer to a man of any other Spanish-speaking culture or origin regardless of his race (Humes et al., 2011).

Latin@ for the purposes of this study, was used—rather than the more common *Latina/o*, or the use of only the masculine form, *Latino*—to refer to persons of both genders. The term *Latin@* both promotes gender neutrality and respects individuals who do not conform to traditional gender binaries (Gutiérrez, 2013).

2. *Hispanic or Latino* is used in the present study when referencing the pan-ethnic category used in US statistical surveys. The US Census Bureau defines *Hispanic or Latinos* as:

those people who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2010 questionnaire – “Mexican,” “Puerto Rican,” or “Cuban,” as well as those who indicate that they are “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.” People who do not identify with one of the specific origins listed on the questionnaire but indicate that they are “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin” are those

whose origins are from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic (Humes et al., 2011).

It should be noted that race is a social construct and that these categories of race and ethnicity have been developed by US Federal reporting agencies for statistical uses (Humes et al., 2011).

3. *Culture* is defined as:

representing a social system of accumulated beliefs, attitudes, habits, and values that are responses to specific circumstances. [...] Geography, immigration status, generation, social class, gender, family history, migration patterns, language, and religious affiliations all have major influences on how culture is developed. These cultural factors can differ greatly between members of the same ethnic group, and at times can be quite similar to those of individuals who are from different ethnic groups. [...] All individuals have culture and [...] live culturally (Howard, 2010, p 52–54).

4. *Majority-culture schools* are defined as schools in the US that promote the English language and other white Eurocentric, male, middle-class perspectives and ideologies as the norm; this dominant culture is maintained by suppressing or ignoring other cultures (Spring, 2010).

5. *White privilege* refers to privileges, opportunities, and gratuities offered by society to those who are white (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2012); these privileges are often not recognized by the dominant group (McIntosh, 1989). In this study, white privilege is used to understand the experiences of Latina teachers in the context of the primarily white female teacher education faculties and the teacher workforce.

6. *Teachers of color, educators of color, people of color, communities of color* denote teachers, educators, groups and communities respectively, who are American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Latin@, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Mixed-Ethnicity. As used in this study, these terms mean individuals, groups, or communities that share a historical legacy of being targeted and oppressed by racism in the US society and in majority-culture schools. These terms are socially constructed and imply inclusive social relationships, although they may have different meanings outside of the US (Vidal-Ortiz, 2008). Despite their limitations, these terms are used in this study in an attempt to move away from terms such as *minority* or *racial and ethnic minorities*; such terms are problematic, as they can imply lower group numbers or even subordination.

7. *Culturally and linguistically diverse teachers*. Although culture, in the present study, is not exclusively linked to race and ethnicity, for the purposes of this study, *culturally and linguistically diverse teachers* are defined as those teachers who self-report their ethnicity as not being “White non-Hispanic or Latino,” (Humes et al., 2011) as well as teachers for whom English is not their native language (Oregon Department of Education, Minority Teacher Act Status Report, 2014).

8. *Teacher diversity gap* refers to the need for a teacher workforce that includes ethnically, racially, culturally and linguistically diverse teachers. The gap in this study may also be used to describe the lack of parity between ethnic minority students and ethnic minority teachers (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012).

9. *Teacher trajectory* is the teacher career pathway; this pathway includes distinct phases of academic preparation and readiness for college, as well as the successful completion of a teacher education program. Teacher education comprises pre-service training, novice in-

service teaching (1–3 years) and progression to veteran teacher status after seven years of teaching experience (New Teacher Center, n.d).

10. *Opportunity gap* is the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities that are important to school quality. This unequal distribution is influenced by social, political, and economic factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, language, and immigration history (Howard, 2010).

11. *Achievement gap* is the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits in academic performance or educational attainment between groups of students by gender, race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English-language learner status or geographical location (National Education Association, Achievement Gaps, n.d.).

12. *Deficit thinking* places the blame for student failure on the student and the student's lack of the traits that are valued and necessary for academic success in majority-culture schools. "This type of thinking leads to policies designed to instill those desirable traits/behaviors in students or in students' parents." (Cooper, 2014, p. 1). The use of a deficit perspective in research that paints groups that face challenges as having weaknesses or problems, often fails to highlight community strengths and societal factors (Gonzales, 2012; Mertens, 2009; Ochoa, 2007). *Deficit thinking* in the present study also relates to biases and assumptions in the dominant discourse, especially that teachers of color are inadequately prepared or are less qualified educators. Deficit thinking leads to the pervasive stereotype that Latinas are only qualified to work as educational assistants, Spanish teachers, or bilingual teachers, or to work with English Language Learners. Avoiding a deficit perspective in research design means in the present study taking a deliberate stance to highlight resistance, resilience, and strengths of Latina teachers.

13. *Racism* is the belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability, and that a particular race is superior to others (American Heritage Dictionary, 2011). In this study, racism at the society level is perceived as being mirrored in schools, and is seen as a contributor to prejudice and discrimination against students of color, the parents of students of color, teachers of color, and communities of color.

14. *Microaggressions* are subtle or explicit daily experiences of racism (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). While a specific instance of a microaggression (e.g., being asked for identification by a police officer) may seem trivial to an outsider, their cumulative impact can be deeply wounding to persons who do not enjoy majority-culture privilege.

15. *Systematic or institutional racism* in this study means “racial bias within institutions such as schools where disparate outcomes reveal institutional racism, whether or not there is racist intent on the part of individuals within that institution” (Haque & Winsor, 2013, p. 6). It also refers to “policies or practices that intentionally or unintentionally enable white privilege to be reinforced” (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2012, p. 6).

16. *Structural racism* in this study means “the cumulative effects of history, ideology, and culture and the result of institutions and policies that favor whites and disadvantage people of color” (Haque & Winsor, 2013, p. 6).

17. *Disproportionality* is the “over-representation of students of color in areas that impact their access to educational attainment. This term is a statistical concept to express disparities across student groups” (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2012, p. 7).

18. *Underserved students* refers to students who are more likely to receive substandard education due to their race, ethnicity, English language proficiency, socioeconomic status,

gender, sexual orientation, ability status, or geographic location. Many students are not served well in the American education system because of a consciously inequitable education system (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2012).

19. *Educational equity* is “fairness and justice in allocating resources, opportunities, and treatment for the success of every student” (Education Northwest, 2014, para. 6) “no matter what their national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, [ability status], first language, or other distinguishing characteristic” (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2012, p. 6).

Further, policies and practices that support educational equity in schools target the “institutional and structural barriers that lead to poor outcomes for communities of color” (Haque & Winsor, 2013, p. 6).

20. *Testimonio* has its roots in Latin American liberation pedagogy, and promotes emancipation through a discourse of solidarity against community oppression (Beverly, 2004). In the present study, *testimonio* is used as a research methodology that situates Latina teachers within a collective teacher trajectory marked by systematic and structural inequities; this methodology provides a platform for centering the analysis on their voices, resistance, and resilience, and for voicing a collective discourse for social justice.

21. *Counternarratives* are narratives that redress or stand in opposition to majoritarian stories or racist, sexist, classist narratives (Yosso, 2005).

22. *Rural* is defined by urban-rural classifications of geographical areas. “The US Census Bureau identifies two types of urban areas: Urbanized Areas (UAs) of 50, 000 or more people; Urban Clusters (UCs) of at least 2, 500 and less than 50,000 people. “Rural” encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area” (US Census Bureau, Urban and Rural Classification, 2015, para. 1). However, in Oregon,

anywhere east of the Cascade Mountain range has been portrayed in the media as rural (Crandall & Weber, 2005), despite the fact that central Oregon's Deschutes County contains one of Oregon's eight urbanized areas (i.e., areas with 50,000 or more people, State of Oregon, 2013), as well as the state's sixth-largest school district (Oregon Department of Education, Student Enrollment Report, 2014). The present study is situated in central and eastern Oregon, and comprises fourteen school districts that have been federally designated as 2014–15 Title VI-B rural low income school districts. These districts are allocated “additional formula funds and flexibility in the use of certain NCLB funds to small, rural districts” (Oregon Department of Education, Rural Education Initiative, 2014) to improve student achievement.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this *testimonio* study was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of nine Latina teachers' progress through the teacher trajectory with the goal of adding new *conocimientos* (i.e., understandings) about the persistent teacher diversity gap, specifically the disparity among Latin@ students and Latina teachers in Oregon rural schools. These rural schools are situated outside of traditional Latin@ diaspora communities where rapid and substantial demographic changes have highlighted the political urgency to address the inequities of the student–teacher mismatch. Along with the empirical data, the information in the present study will be used to better understand Latina teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. This study is informed by the sociohistorical and sociopolitical context of Latin@ American education in the United States, as well as two fields of knowledge: cultural theories, and adult learning theories that apply to this research population. The review of literature was ongoing throughout the research process. Multiple sources of information were used to conduct the relevant literature review, including professional journals, books, internet resources, periodicals, archived collections, and dissertations.

The first section of this chapter is a review of the sociohistorical and sociopolitical events that provide important contextual details of Latin@ education, schooling, and career-decision making relevant to the study population. The second section reviews relevant literature on cultural theories used to explain Latin@s' school experiences, academic achievement, and social mobility. In the third section, adult development and learning theories relevant to working with prospective and in-service Latina teachers is reviewed. The review of literature in this section provides an understanding of the importance of ethnic identity development and the use of narrative in adult development, as well as the application of the learning theories of andragogy,

experiential learning theories, and transformative learning theories. A summary of the chapter is followed by a discussion of the present study's conceptual framework.

Section One: Sociohistorical and Sociopolitical Context of Latin@ Education

A colonial history sits at the root of the contested relationship between the US and Mexico. A review of this history and relevant social policy provides an understanding of Oregon's Mexican-origin population, the states largest Latin@ population. The Spanish conquest of Mexico in the 18th Century and the Mexican-American war in the mid-19th Century were justified by Eurocentric ideologies of cultural and religious superiority. The US occupation of what is now the Southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas resulted in Mexico's loss of valuable land and resources. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) promised US citizenship rights to any Mexicans remaining in US-occupied territories. These rights were never clearly determined or enforced, resulting in racialized structures and systems that continue to stigmatize Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and that underpin contemporary acts of discrimination (Acuña, 2015; Garcia, 2001; May, 2011; Spring, 2010; Telles & Ortiz, 2008).

Prompted by the pre- and post-war labor needs of World War I, World War II, and the Korean War, Mexican and Mexican-American families immigrated and migrated to rural Oregon communities, primarily from Mexico and Texas. Developments in irrigation technology also resulted in a booming agricultural industry that resulted in aggressive organized labor recruiting and the opportunity for Mexicans and Mexican Americans to escape discriminatory conditions and low wages in the Southwest. A pattern emerged of racially motivated recruitment drives during labor shortages, followed by deportation when work again became scarce. Springer (2001) posits that not only did these labor practices result in unstable and segregated housing and

employment for Mexicans and Mexican Americans, but that they also contributed to social perceptions of Mexicans as dispensable. This racist perception justified school exclusion, segregation, inequitable school funding, and Americanization programs aimed at eliminating native languages and cultures among Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Civil rights, the Chicano Movement, and Colegio Cesar Chavez. A number of landmark legal cases preceded, strengthened, and followed the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s (Valencia, 2005). These cases included (*Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* (1930; school desegregation case in San Diego, CA), *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947; Mexican Americans declared not Indians, school segregation illegal), *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954; school desegregation), *Lau v. Nichols* (1974; public schools required to provide special assistance for English learners), and *Plyler v. Doe* (1982; undocumented immigrant children granted access to a free and appropriate public education). Two federal laws were enacted to prohibit discrimination in federally funded programs and to provided funding for bilingual education programs: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Acts of 1968 and 1974, respectively. The Higher Education Act of 1965 provided federal “funds to assist developing higher education institutions” (Maldonado, 2000).

Social movements such as the Chicano Movement, the Chicana movement, and the Chicano Student Movement (1960–1970s) highlighted Chican@/Latin@ resistance to marginalization in the US public school system (i.e., high school “blow outs” in East Los Angeles), as well as in the greater US sociopolitical context. This resistance has continued from the 1990s to the present day in a number of laws designed to advocate for and support undocumented students. These laws include Dreamers lobbying for the Development, Relief, and

Education for Alien Minors (The DREAM Act), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA). Inspired by other Civil Rights movements, the Chicano Student Movement challenged school segregation and argued for better educational services, relevant curriculum and textbooks, bilingual education, and an increase in Spanish-speaking educators. These demands were most often addressed by educational and social policies that focused on Americanization (i.e., deculturalization), assimilation, and integration. While present-day policies such as the English-Only movement (which advocates for restrictive language policies), Open Access (i.e., encouraging minority students to enroll at non-selective colleges), and anti-affirmative action sentiment may purport to support all students, they in fact advance a misguided notion of meritocracy, favoring the dominant schooling process and policies, with little consideration of social and institutional inequities that have challenged Latin@ student success. Likewise, little value or recognition has been given to the large variations in Latin@ culture, community, and linguistic capital, stigmatizing the Latin@ community with numerous stereotypes and prejudices (Garcia, 2001; Smith & Bender, 2008; Spring, 2010; Valencia, 2005).

In 1973, as a response to the Chicano Movement, Colegio Cesar Chavez opened in the rural agricultural community of Mount Angel, Oregon. The college was founded by former staff and administrators from "Mount Angel College, a private teacher preparatory college affiliated with the Order of Benedictine Sisters at Mount Angel" (Gamboa, 1995, p. 58). Colegio Cesar Chavez took over the Mount Angel College campus and established the first Chican@ four-year college in the United States. Academic programs were run using a "College Without Walls" (May, 2011, p. 148) approach. This approach granted students' credit for off-campus activities. An academic administrator helped students' design a program of study (May, 2011). The college

offered a completely bilingual and bicultural learning environment. The mission of the college was to serve Chican@ students who were denied access to culturally relevant higher education. The college placed an emphasis on collaboration among students, staff, administrators, their families, and the local community (Colegio Cesar Chavez Collection, 2008). In 1977, twenty-two students graduated from the college “a class that exceeded the combined number of Chicanos graduating from the University of Oregon and Oregon State University” (Gamboa, 1995, p. 58). The college closed its doors in 1983, due to financial difficulties, lack of support from the local community, and the growing political conservatism of the 1980s Reagan era (Colegio Cesar Chavez Collection, 2008; Maldonado, 2000).

Educational equity. In Oregon, there are a number of sociopolitical factors that negatively influence undocumented students' educational experiences and career options (Gamboa, 1995; MacDonald, 2004; Maldonado, 2000). These factors include the state requirement of citizenship documentation to obtain a driver's license, which makes it difficult for students and families to travel to school or work. Although undocumented students may be eligible for in-state tuition they are not eligible to receive federal or state funded financial aid. The high cost of tuition alone may reduce the incentive to pursue education as a means of social mobilization (Cole 2011; Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 2010). Further, a study conducted in the Portland, Oregon area on the subject of exclusionary discipline found that Latin@ students were two times more likely than white students to receive disciplinary action in schools that resulted in suspension or expulsion; this contributed to academic disconnection and influenced dropout rates (Stavenjord, 2012).

Latinas have historically been marginalized both inside and outside their homes and the workplaces (Cotera, 2007; Gonzáles, 2006; Zavella, 1997). Despite this marginalization, Latinas

have made progress in high school and college graduation rates (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Ryan & Siebens, 2012); however, they continue to face institutional racism, sexism, and classism, despite equal opportunity and educational equity policies and practices (Prieto & Villenas, 2012). The following section reviews studies that link Latin@s' school experiences to the ethnic minority teacher shortage.

The shortage of teachers of color. Research on the different stages of the teacher workforce trajectory points to a host of factors that contribute to a persistent gap between the proportions of students of color and teachers of color in schools. These factors include

- Education and school inequities that contribute to low graduation rates and low college-going rates for students of color, thereby shrinking the pool of possible teachers of color candidates,
- Expanded career opportunities for college graduates of color,
- Students of color's negative experiences with teachers discouraging them from pursuing a teaching career,
- Culturally biased teacher entry and exit exams that result in lower pass rates for teacher candidates of color,
- Limited availability and buying power of financial aid, and
- High attrition rates for teachers of colors (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004).

In addition, student enrollment studies argue that decreases in the number of white students coupled with a rapid increase in minority students largely explains the persistent gap between the proportion of students of color and teachers of color (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012;

Oregon University System, 2011). These studies confirm that the teacher diversity staffing issue is complex and involves multiple stakeholders.

Similar to research on educational attainment, the teacher diversity shortage issue is politically charged, with possible causes hotly debated among policy makers in both K–12 and higher education. Higher education has been blamed for not recruiting, preparing, or graduating enough teachers of color who are prepared to teach in schools with high populations of students of color; according to this view, the shortage is primarily a recruitment and preparation issue (Oregon Department of Education, 2012; US Department of Education, 2011). In turn, K–12 public schools are blamed for failing to graduate higher percentages of minority students with college- and career-ready skills (Oregon University System, 2011) and an interest in teaching. Finally, non-profit education advocacy boards blame both K–12 and higher education for not working together to improve teacher preparation, provide master teacher mentors, and link new teacher success to student outcomes (Chalkboard Project, 2012). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, (2010), 35% of new teachers feel only moderately prepared to teach in today's diverse classrooms.

Ingersoll & May (2011) offer a different perspective on the ethnic minority teacher shortage. In their recent quantitative research report, "Recruitment, Retention and the Minority Teacher Shortage" they argue that the number of minority teachers has increased dramatically over the past 20 years, but that minority teacher attrition is instead the most significant factor, contributing to the persistent disparity in the teacher workforce and undermining the success of minority teacher recruitment efforts. Minority teachers participating in Ingersoll & May's (2011) study reported a lack of collective faculty decision-making and instructional autonomy as the greatest factors in their decision to change schools or to leave the teaching career. Since school

and teacher accountability initiatives such as No Child Left Behind, Value Added Models, and Common Core State Standards reduce individual teacher classroom autonomy, these researchers suggest the need for further study of the impact of current educational reforms on minority teacher turnover. Qualitative studies are needed to explore the working conditions that drive minority teachers from the teaching profession.

Critical qualitative research on the Latina teacher shortage reveals hostile working conditions, such as discrimination and marginalization, as contributing to teacher attrition. Latina teachers are often prevented from helping their students retain their language, culture, and identity through the forced use of standardized curriculum and high-stakes testing. Studies have found that networking, socializing, and acts of resistance such as subversively teaching Chican@/Latin@ history and culture, or modifying or scaffolding curriculum for English learners, helped Latina teachers navigate oppressive school environments. However, for many, these acts of resistance were not enough to keep them teaching (Burstein & Montaña, 2011).

These studies suggest the need to listen to the voices of Latina teachers to more fully understand the contextualized experiences that contribute to high ethnic minority teacher attrition. Learning more about Latinas' decisions to enter and persist in the teacher workforce has the potential to inform teacher recruitment and retention initiatives. Most of the research on Latin@s' focuses on the American Southwest (Garcia & Garcia, 2005), does not disaggregate between the experiences of Latin@ and other ethnic minority teachers (Ingersoll and May, 2011), and is focused on urban high ethnic minority school districts (Irizarry, 2011). Missing from the literature are the lived experiences of Latina teachers living and teaching in more rural areas, such as the rural central and eastern Oregon communities focused on in the present study.

These communities have rapidly growing Latin@ student populations (10–34.3% Latin@) and a school district average of only 1% Latin@ teachers (Oregon Department of Education, 2011).

College and career decision-making. Despite historical marginalization in majority-culture schools, Latin@s reached new milestones in college representation in 2011, making up 16.5% of US 18–24 year-old college enrollments (Fry & Lopez, 2012) Latin@s are now the largest minority group on college campuses (Fry & Taylor, 2013). However, Latin@s continue to lag behind in their share of degree recipients for the 18–24 year-old demographic (Fry & Lopez, 2012), with Latinas being more successful than Latinos in earning bachelor's degrees (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008; US Census Bureau, 2010; Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002).

Studies on the college-going process report that Latin@ students are less likely than other peer groups to have access to college preparatory courses, effective veteran teachers (Gándara & Contreras, 2009), or college representatives and institutional materials; they are also less likely to or be assisted by family or friends in the college search process (Martinez & Cervera, 2012). These studies all agree that Latin@ students and families have high college aspirations; however, this demographic is more challenged with fulfilling those aspirations than their peers. This increased challenge is due, in part, to their families' exclusion from important knowledge about the college-going process, poor college advising, and poor access to institutional resources to inform the college search and application process (Martinez & Cervera, 2012).

Much of the research regarding Latin@ educational attainment provides only “statistical portraits” (Irizarry, 2012, p. 292) that exclude the voices of study participants, who often report facing discriminatory conditions in US schools. Martinez & Cervera (2012) acknowledge that one of the limitations of their quantitative longitudinal study examining Latino students' college information-seeking patterns was the researchers' inability to measure the quality of the

interactions Latin@ students had with college representatives, friends, and family members; the researchers were also unable to determine why institutional information resources were not more effective in encouraging students to apply to college.

In another quantitative study, Risco & Duffy (2010) used Jones' (1989) Career Decision Profile (CDP) to study the work values, career decidedness, and career choices of 236 Latin@ students. The authors found that gender differences could explain variance in the career decision-making profiles of Latin@ incoming college students: Latina students were found to be more indecisive, and tended to place a higher value on careers with social interest, while Latino students placed more importance on earnings and on working without close supervision. The researchers in this study also reported that leaving out the voices of participants was a study limitation. The authors make a call for additional studies using more culturally relevant constructs for work values, as well as studies on the intersections of identity; such studies could help understand gender-related barriers to career choice.

Prieto (2009) argues that prospective Latina Bilingual education teachers' early learning in the home—helping in their households, caring for family members, and acting as bicultural brokers and translators—contributes to their college choice to be *maestras*. However, when making a career decision to be a full-time bilingual teacher, their perceived or actual Spanish proficiency or English proficiency was a huge factor in their decision making, as they did not want to jeopardize the learning of their future bilingual students. Burstein & Montano (2011) explain that, for Chicana teacher activists, the decision to become a teacher can be a political act, or can express a desire to give back to the Chican@ community and “become activist and agents of social and political change” (p. 41).

Irizarry (2012) conducted a multi-year participatory action research project with Latin@ students who attended two different urban Northeastern high schools. This researcher used Critical Race Theory and LatCrit to understand disparities and inequities among the students' schools, academic success, and college-going journey. Unlike related quantitative studies, Irizarry's research was conducted with a "humanizing" (p. 293) approach that captured the lived experiences of the students' secondary schooling, as well as their pathways into "or away from" (p. 292) postsecondary institutions. Irizarry reported that one factor important for increasing Latin@ college-going and career decision-making was an appreciation and receptiveness to advice from teachers of color who drew from their own PK–20 experiences to support Latin@ students.

Qualitative research similar to Irizarry's that explores the lived experiences of Latina teachers' college and career decision-making by studying early educational experiences, teacher preparation, and induction into the teacher workforce reports widespread systematic and structural experiences of racialized, gendered, and class-based oppression and marginalization that impacted teachers' college and career choices along all points of the educational and teacher professional pipelines. For example, these studies reveal that Latin@ K–12 students are disproportionally dissuaded from taking college preparation courses; that pre-service teachers are silenced, ignored, or singled out as token Latina representatives; and that new teachers report discrimination and subordination in their current positions (Cantu, 2012; Hernandez, 2010; Irizarry, 2011; Prieto, 2009). However, these qualitative studies mostly focus on only one or two points of the college and career pipeline; additional studies— like the present one—are needed to gain a holistic, contextualized, life-story view of Latina teachers' trajectory into the teaching profession.

In summary, studies that use quantitative measures to examine educational attainment, college going, or career decision-making “without engaging a theoretical analysis of the impact of racism and class inequity produce fragmented and decontextualized ‘truths’” (Darder, 2002, Chapter 2, Section 4, para. 6). Also, studying gender differences without considering varying conceptualizations of gender and sociocultural background results in a limited understanding of college and career meaning-making. In contrast, qualitative studies that include the voices of Latina teachers provide evidence that the college-going process and career decision-making are “inextricably linked” (Irizarry, 2012, p. 306) with the underrepresentation of Latina teachers. Qualitative studies can provide a deeper understanding of the impact of injustices through collaboration with the participants. The review of sociohistorical and sociopolitical context of Latin@ American education provides contextual details for understanding the roots of racism and resistance underpinning the experiences of Latin@s in majority-culture schools.

Section Two: Culture and Cultural Theories

Culture. Culture has commonly been explained using by Hall’s (1976) analogy of an iceberg, as there are a limited number of surface or conscious aspects of culture (i.e., behaviors, superficial beliefs, and practices), along with a larger set of submerged or unconscious aspects of culture (i.e., values, thought patterns, beliefs and assumptions, gender roles, importance of time, human interaction, and biases). This image of an iceberg helps researchers to understand how deeper aspects of a new culture require active participation. Bennett (2013), however, challenges such a conceptualization of culture as a dynamic “process whereby groups of people coordinate meaning and action, yielding both institutional artifacts and patterns of behavior” (p. 1). However, Bennett does acknowledge that the iceberg metaphor can be as a starting point for examining cultural theories: Failing to recognize the importance of the greater invisible aspects

of culture and focusing solely on the visual aspects of culture has led to culture wars, such as those used to justify colonial projects and contemporary cultural-based conflicts (Spring, 2010). A review of cultural theories is important to understanding Latina teachers' lived experiences and how cultural theories have made both negative and positive contributions to teaching and learning.

Cultural deficit theories. Similar to the genetic deficit model that attributes learning outcomes to inherited genes (Jensen, 1969), the cultural deficit model is used to justify personal and institutional racism. This deficit perspective implies that the academic gap among many students from low-income and culturally diverse backgrounds originates from cultural or generational poverty (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006). Students from these backgrounds are said to be "deficient in cognitive development, attention span, expectations of reward from knowledge and task completion, ability to use adults as sources of information, ability to delay gratification, and linguistic and symbolic development" (Jacob & Jordan, 1993, p. 5). Valenzuela (1999) asserts that cultural deficit theories have led to subtractive schooling practices that devalue students' culture and language, and deny them caring relationships. Cultural deficit theories blame students for their academic failure (Ovando, et al., 2006), and Spring (1997) posits that cultural deficit theories have been used to justify historical and contemporary cultural genocide. Taken together, these deficit theories are both an "obstacle to academic success" (Howard, 2010, p. 48) and a source of longstanding psychological and physical wounding (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Important to the present study's population is how cultural deficit perspectives have led to viewing language and culture as problems rather than as assets in schools. These cultural deficits are often addressed through remedial or watered-down curriculum (Howard, 2010; Ovando, et al. 2006).

Cultural difference theories. The underlining assumption of cultural difference theories is that differences—not deficits—between home and school account for underachievement. Ovando et al. (2006) write that “discrepancies between the sociocultural and linguistic patterns in the home and in the school produces underachievement when these factors are not addressed through accommodations according to cultural background” (p. 205). Instructional practices such as culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), have developed from these theories, and promote a critical, student-centered approach to learning. Even though cultural difference theories make a positive shift away from deficit perspectives, there remains a troubling racialized characterization of low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse students as being unprepared for majority-culture schools (Delpit, 2006; Ovando, et al., 2006). Consequently, students and their families are targeted for change, with the result being a missed opportunity to view individual and cultural differences as resources or resistances in majority-culture schools (TESOL, 2010).

This literature also highlights the challenges of training new teachers (Glimps & Ford, 2010) and in-service teachers (Sleeter, 2008) in culturally responsive practices. Unexamined biases and critical self-reflection require an ongoing practice and professional commitment (Gay, 2010). Howard (2010), Irizarry and Donaldson (2012), and Gibson (2002) point out that cultural sensitivity and culturally responsive practices apply to all educators, but are quick to point out the urgent need to improve the number of culturally and linguistically diverse educators; this is the central point of the present study.

Sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory provides a lens for understanding the social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978) and is a move away from a tight focus on culturally compatible classroom practices (Ovando et al., 2006). From a sociocultural perspective, the

students' learning is transmitted through social interactions with the teacher, as well as using cultural and linguistic resources found within the students' community. Classroom practices that include dialogue, collaboration, and project-based learning provide students with opportunities to use sociocultural knowledge and resources to construct new ways of knowing. As described in the next section on adult learning theories, Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez (1992) ethnographic studies with Latin@ students emphasize the relationships between the teacher and learner, as well as the way power structures and social context influence the learning process. This process of learning and development is influenced by the social world at the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other socially constructed identity points (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Howard (2010) writes "These cultural factors can differ greatly between members of the same ethnic group, and at times can be quite similar to those of individuals who are from different ethnic groups" (p. 53). Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) argue for the inclusion of historical, social, and political contexts to understand students' learning and social interactions. Sociocultural theory is applicable to working with Latina teachers, particularly Latina teachers working in multicultural rural schools.

A review of cultural theories informs the role Latina teachers play in students' educational experiences and outcomes, as well as providing a lens into students' educational experiences.

Section Three: Adult Learning and Development

Understanding adult learning and development theories that apply to Latin@ teachers informs how these teachers make meaning of their experiences and of their perceptions of the teacher trajectory, teaching profession, and Latina teacher recruitment and retention.

Adult development theories. Adult development theories inform how Latinas grow and change throughout their lives, and inform what is known about their relationship to formal education. Theories and studies of racial and ethnic identity development, as well as narrative as development, provide an understanding of how the present study's participants' perspectives changed throughout the teacher trajectory as they experienced various teaching and learning environments.

Ethnic identity development. Latina teachers' college choice, retention, and persistence are influenced by the strength of their cultural orientation or ethnic identity when they enter college, as well as by how they situate their ethnic identity as they experience their learning and learning environment. Research indicates that ethnic identity development is associated with self-concept, self-esteem, and school success (Clark & Flores, 2001; García, 2004, Phinney, 1990; Pizarro, 2005).

One of the most influential perspectives on ethnic identity development is that of internal psychological evolution and development, which has traditionally been used as the framework for stage and phase models that assume ideal end-points (Erickson, 1963; Marcia, 1980). Phinney's (1993) sequential ethnic identity model outlines a three-stage progression that adolescents follow in developing their ethnic identity. This process starts with a stage of unexamined ethnic identity, continues to a stage of searching for ethnic identity, and ends with achieving or securing an ethnic identity that gives one a stable sense of self.

Tennant and Pogson (1995; as well as others, e.g., Merriam & Clark, 1991; Merriam, et al., 2007) have suggested moving away from stage- and phase-based theories; they instead suggest that adult development is best understood as a lifelong socially and culturally contingent process of negotiation with real experiences that trigger change and transformation. This

sociocultural perspective may be more useful, as compared to stage- and phase-based theories, in understanding Latina prospective teachers who enter college from diverse backgrounds with unique experiences. Pizzaro (2005) suggests that individuals rarely develop along a single dimension of identity, and states, for example, that “ethnic identity interacts with racial identity (through experiences with discrimination)” (p. 10). More recent longitudinal studies by Torres (2003, 2004) examined how ethnic identity formation during Latin@ students’ first two years of college is influenced by situational conditions such as familial influence and generational status. Torres’ findings indicated that first-generation students have more difficulty adjusting to college than their peers from second-generation families. This is significant, as this finding introduces the importance of understanding how contextual forces and societal expectations influence ethnic students’ college success.

Wortham (2002) conducted an ethnographic study of Latin@ adolescents adjusting to culturally new environments such as those found in new Latin@ diaspora communities. Wortham found that Latinas were more likely than Latinos to adopt dual identities, identifying with an Anglo orientation in school and a Mexican orientation at home. However, he cautions readers to not “homogenize Latin[@] needs, aspirations, and beliefs” (p. 138), as ethnic identity development is complex and contextual.

The feminist writer Gloria Anzaldua (1987, 1990) writes that the complexity of Chicanas’ lives does not easily fit into categories, and cannot be reduced to linear stages with desired end points. She believes that Chicana identity development should be examined through a *New Mestiza Consciousness*—an emerging identity of mixed race/ethnicity formed through the continuous and ongoing intersectionality among ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, class, power and domination. Delgado Bernal (2006) finds that Chicanas experience school in multiple

dimensions, and that policies and practices that build on a *mestiza* consciousness contribute to educational success. In a study with Chicana undergraduate students, Delgado Bernal found that bicultural and bilingual identity development helped the students navigate dominant school structures and was a form of resistance against “a society that emphasizes assimilation” (p. 123). The students described both benefits and challenges to having a dual identity: the ability to see things in more than one way, compared with the ongoing strain of balancing the diverse cultures that they were connected to.

In light of this body of research, it is clear that there are limitations to what can be learned by studying Latina development solely through racial and ethnic identity phase- or stage-based models.

Narrative as development. Life narratives are often used to capture the diversity of adult learners as they make meaning of their life experiences and express the stories of their multiple subjectivities (Holling, 2006). Narrative is a holistic approach to understanding adult development as an unfolding story. According to Rossiter (1999), narratives are contextual, interpretive, retrospective, and temporal life stories that are self-authored, mediate change, and create one's trajectory of development. Narrative lends choice and power to tell and re-story one's personal life experiences outside of the frameworks of dualist, essentialist, and universalist ideals of women's development, dominant ideologies, and deficit theories (Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006; Qin, 2004). Flores (2000), among others (e.g., Delgado Bernal, 2006), argues that narratives interrupt the flow of dominant perceptions of Latinas' language and culture and serve as strategies for individual and community resistance.

Testimonies, a form of personal narrative, have historically been used for emancipatory activism and as a “method to create politicized understand of identity and community” (The Latina

Feminist Group, 2001 p. 3). Acts of oppression can be recast through *testimonios* as acts of “transformational resistance” (Delgado Bernal, 2006, p. 115) and have the potential to trigger personal development through new meaning-making (Merriam et al., 2007) and “a reciprocal process of exchange [igniting] interdependent solidarity” (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona 2012, p. 368).

The perspectives of racial and ethnic identity development and narrative as development provide an adult developmental framework for understanding Latina teachers' progress through the teacher trajectory. In summary, a narrative approach offers a “dialectical person-sociocultural perspective” (Qin, 2004, p. 305) that is applicable to both adult learning and development.

Adult learning theories. As with the previous discussion about adult development, it is important to recognize that there is not one single learning theory that covers how adults learn, and that each theory may be examined through alternative conceptions (Merriam, 2008). This review of the literature focused on the significant learning theories that apply to working with Latina teachers. These theories center on the interaction between building the capacity to learn (i.e., individual learning), becoming a reflective practitioner (i.e., situational learning), and taking action as an agent of change (i.e., identifying social inequities) (Tusting & Barton, 2003), and form the framework for teacher preparation. Current scholarship on these topics includes the application of andragogy, experiential learning theories, and transformative learning theories.

Andragogy and self-directed learning. One of the most influential leaders in the field of adult learning, Malcom Knowles (1968), advanced the European concept of Andragogy, “the art and science of helping adults learn,” (Merriam, et al., 2007, p. 84) which makes the assumptions the adult learner is someone who

- Has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning,

- Has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning,
- Has learning needs closely related to changing social roles,
- Is problem-centered and interested in the immediate application of knowledge,
- Is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors, and
- Needs to know why he or she needs to learn something. (Merriam, 2001; Merriam et al., 2007).

Grounded in the field of humanistic psychology, Knowles's (1968) model continues to be used to describe and design programs for adult learners, despite criticisms that this model does not take into consideration the learning situation or context, and that it makes unsupported claims that adults are universally autonomous and intrinsically driven toward growth (Merriam, 2001; Merriam et al, 2007). One aspect of Knowles's (1988) model is that adults grow to be more self-directed; this idea contributed to the study of self-directed learning models that posit the goals that adults should accept responsibility for their learning, critically reflect on their learning, and develop emancipatory practices. These are important goals for teachers; however, they may provoke tensions within the teacher–learner contract. Latinas often bring cultural and linguistic differences to the classroom, as well as past negative schooling experiences that have denied them opportunities to develop their own voice, making such goals potentially difficult to achieve (Pizarro, 2005). Brookfield (1995) cautions that scholarship “on gender has criticized the ideal of the independent self-directed learner as reflecting patriarchal values of division, separation and competition” (p. 2). Arguably, self-directed learning is one of the most widely visible and controversial adult learning concepts, with debate over the role of the learner with regard to autonomy and social agency.

Experiential Learning Theories. Adult learning theories that view experiences as critical components of knowledge construction focus on the learner's reflection on lived experiences and on the learner's ability to bring new meaning to existing situations (Fenwick, 2003). Dewey (1938/1998) wrote of this process as learning through doing and asserted that the "active process of organizing facts and ideas is an ever present educational process" (p. 102). Knowles's (1968) assumptions of andragogy posited life experiences as a critical component of adult learning. Experiential learning theories are applicable to understanding Latina teachers' trajectories and how their lived experiences, set in a sociocultural context, shape their learning and inform their teaching practice, as well as their persistence in the teacher workforce. Two approaches to experiential learning from a critical cultural perspective (Fenwick, 2003) are reviewed in this section: pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2006) and funds of knowledge (Moll, et. al., 1992). A critical cultural lens challenges majority culture norms of experiences (Fenwick, 2000). Also reviewed in this section are communities of practice (Wenger, 2000) and *sabres docents* (Mercado, 2002), both of which stem from a situative learning theory (Fenwick, 2003) perspective of experiential learning.

Pedagogies of the home. hooks (1994) asserts that race, sex, and class empower students in different ways, which may limit their ability to act on the inequities apparent in their lives. Delgado Bernal's (2006) qualitative studies with Chicana college students reveal the strategies Chicanas use to overcome patriarchal structures and cultural constraints that may impede their educational journey. These strategies or "pedagogies of the home" (p. 114) are learned through everyday communication and practices in the home and community, and are also used as resistance to dominant ideologies and practices of teaching and learning. These strategies are tools of transformative resistance that highlight Chicana and Latina cultural strengths, defy

deficit perceptions of Chicana and Latina learners, and are “motivated by emancipatory interest” (p. 115). The role of the adult educator in this learning model is one of life mentor, drawing on cultural sensitivities and identity to inform lessons taught through “legends, *corridos*, storytelling, and behavior” (p. 114). Delgado Bernal (2006) writes “The teaching and learning of everyday life are also key for the emotional and physical survival of Chicana students, yet they are seldom acknowledged in educational research and practice” (p. 115). Additional qualitative studies are needed to learn more about Chicana feminist pedagogies and how they inform the lived experiences of Latina teachers.

Funds of knowledge. In their ethnographic study with working-class Mexican families in Arizona, Moll et al. (1992) gathered information about household and community resources that were used to survive in a given culture. Their objective was to develop a stronger understanding of how and what people knew by visiting students' homes and communities (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These out-of-school resources or funds of knowledge would then be used to design school curricula, forming a bridge (i.e., scaffolded learning experiences) between the classroom and home. The motivation for Moll et al.'s study was to disrupt negative perceptions of Latin@ students and families, and to privilege community and family historical and cultural knowledge. Yosso (2005) builds on Moll et al.'s (1992) concept of funds of knowledge, referring to accumulated cultural knowledge as *familial capital*, a form of community cultural wealth. These notions of experiential learning are important to working with Latina teachers, who often experience the teacher trajectory from a hegemonic perspective, negatively impacting recruitment and retention.

Communities of practice. Learning through collaboration with others is another form of experiential learning. Wenger (2000) describes *communities of practice* as based on three

principles: (a) a shared domain of interest (e.g., bilingual education), (b) the community (e.g., bilingual educators interact and engage in shared activities and (c) practice (e.g., collective *testimonios*. This situated and social sharing of experiences allows individuals and communities to refine their practices, develop new practices, or discard and change “practices that are harmful or dysfunctional” (Fenwick, 2003, p. 27). Communities of practice are formed out of passion for learning through experiences, and the literature supports the suitability of this approach to developing Latina teachers.

Sabres docentes. Mercado (2002) like Ernst-Slavit and Poveda (2011), and Wenger, Dinsmore, and Villagomez (2012), operationalized the concept of *sabres docentes* as “teacher knowledge acquired through everyday experiences and associated reflective processes” (Wenger et al., 2012, p. 2). These authors studies on teacher-driven decision-making, pedagogical stances, and professional educator identity in rural charter, rural traditional, and rural community-based after-school programs produced similar findings, despite the fact that the populations sampled varied for all of these studies (Mercado in Mexico; Ernst and Poveda in Spain; Wenger et al., in eastern Oregon). These study findings indicated that educators in rural schools working with students from low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds mediated their practices through their personal experiences and daily interactions with their peers and students. These researchers asserted that these educators moved from individual cognitive work (i.e., scripted curricula) to context-dependent situational approaches (i.e., practices or *saberes docentes* linked to shared beliefs). This “collective multicultural framework” (Wenger et al., 2012, p.) then creates the foundation for daily pedagogical decisions.

Critical cultural and situative experiential learning theories provide models for working with prospective and in-service Latina teachers. These learning theories are also important lenses

for understanding the organizational conditions, role in decision-making, and autonomy in selecting curricula that attract and retain Latina teachers in rural multicultural schools.

Transformative learning theories. Mezirow (1978) and Freire (1970) have both been influential in advancing two important adult learning goals: transformational and emancipatory learning. Mezirow (1978) proposed a theory of adult learning grounded in constructivist theory, based on his study of the experiences women had as they returned to college to complete their education. The findings of his study described how people's perceptions of themselves and their relationships change after reflecting on past habits of mind or frames of reference; through critical self-reflection on these experiences and through dialogue, people can come to a new way of knowing. Cranton (2006), building on Mezirow's (1978) theories, explains that transformative learning encourages the learner to become more inclusive, discriminating, and open to others views. This perspective of transformative learning is applicable to Latina teachers, as they may encounter disorienting events as they prepare for and seek employment in the teacher workforce, and as they try to make meaning of these experiences within a profession currently immersed in unprecedented educational and teacher preparation reforms. For these reasons, Cranton (2006) posits the need to develop learners' critical inquiry skills, paying special attention to power structures and individual differences as a foundational step in transformative learning. However, Mezirow's (2000) cognitive-rational approach to transformative learning has been critiqued as focusing too much on individual transformation (Brookfield, 1995; Dirkx, 1998) and excluding social transformation and context (Merriam, 2001, 2008).

Freire (1970) offers another conception of transformative learning, which was developed based on his work with illiterate, impoverished Brazilian farmers living under colonial rule. According to Freire (2008), the goal of education is personal liberation and social emancipation

from the oppressor—through the dialogical process of *conscientization* (consciousness-raising), learners become more aware of their lives. Freire argues for doing away with the *banking system* of education—one in which knowledge is deposited into empty minds—and replacing it with *problem posing* education, which opens critical dialogue on real-world issues and takes action against hegemony and oppression. Vella (2009) explains that the dialogue in Freire's system of education is “among learners, of whom the teacher is one” (p. 216), ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and everyone is learning. However, Freire's work has also been criticized as reinforcing patriarchal ideologies and overpowering the voices of women (Brookfield, 2005; hooks, 1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot, as cited in Delgado Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006).

Burciaga and Tavares (2006) posit the importance of *testimonio* in building and documenting sisterhood in academic settings. Such sisterhood values collaborative learning and bringing women out of isolation and into a collective space, demanding recognition of their struggles for social justice. To support Latina teachers' transformative journeys as educators, it is important to understand their unique, gendered cultural knowledge base, and to provide space for their voices.

In summary, the research on race and ethnic identity development points to the need for institutions and educators to reflect on their assumptions about Latina students' cultural norms, which are “often thought of as cultural deficits and turn them into cultural resources” (Delgado Bernal, 2006, p. 127). These cultural resources can be used to create inclusive learning environments and culturally specific practices that benefit from the multiple voices of learners. Narrative methods such as *testimonio* provide individual and collective opportunities for reflection on life experiences. Qualitative studies are needed to understand how the intersection

of identity in Latina teachers impacts their college and career choices, and how the fluid developmental processes that appears to characterize this demographic can be supported in schools and in teacher preparation programs.

The sociocultural perspective of adult learning provides a wider lens through which to view the complex elements that make up the lives of Latina teachers. Through understanding the intersectionality among race, ethnicity, gender, language, social class, and sexuality—along with using various other lenses for understanding development— institutions and educators can gain a more inclusive view of development, which can be used to improve the educational experiences of Latina teachers. Experiential learning theories and transformative and emancipatory learning theories have proved useful in fostering critical reflection, addressing social justice, and making a connection between adult development and learning. These learning theories may also be applied to change the way these women are educated and how they approach the teaching practice.

Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework for the present study developed from this review of the literature and this researcher's experience in teacher education recruitment, specifically the recruitment of Latina prospective teachers. The present study used the structure of the conceptual framework to align the research questions, coding, research findings, analysis, and interpretation of the data. The research findings were organized and reported using this framework. This structure provided a background for ongoing reflection and for the identification of gaps in knowledge.

The first research question intended to explore what had the greatest impact on Latina teachers' educational experiences. The conceptual category for compiling participants' stories

about their educational experiences was “Impacts on Educational Experiences.” The literature on telling stories to make social change led this researcher to *testimonio* methodology. *Testimonios* are told, heard, and listened to for the purpose of establishing solidarity to elicit change for a particular community. The literature reviewed on the sociohistorical and sociopolitical context of Latina education provided a detailed context for understanding the participants’ experiences. LatCrit and Community Cultural Wealth models were used as theoretical lenses to explore the participants’ experiences with regards to race, class, gender, and cultural consciousness.

The second research question sought to understand how Latina teachers make meaning of their decision to enter and persist in the teaching trajectory. This category was “Entering and Persisting as Teachers.” The literature on the teacher diversity gap and college and career decision-making informed an understanding of the participants’ stories of being pushed and pulled in and out of the teacher trajectory. The third research question explored the participants’ perceptions of the role they play in students’ educational experiences and outcomes expressed by the category of “Roles as Latina teachers.” The literature review of cultural theories provided insight into culturally responsive teaching practices and culturally relevant pedagogy. An understanding of cultural theories and experiential learning theories led to counter-storytelling for analyzing and discussion the findings.

The fourth research question was intended to explore what the participants could tell educational leaders about the recruitment and retention of Latina teachers. This information was hoped to contribute to the present study’s recommendations for university–school–community partnerships, education policy leaders, and the field of adult learning. The literature on adult development and learning supported the development of this category which was labeled “Recruitment and Retention”.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this *testimonio* study was to explore perceptions of the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in Oregon K–12 rural schools with a participant sample of Latina teachers. It was anticipated that, through a better understanding of these participants' teacher trajectories, research-based decisions could be made to promote educational equity and to inform university–school–community partnerships engaged in initiatives to improve the number of Latin@ teachers employed by Oregon's rural K–12 school districts. To understand the participants' teacher trajectories, four research questions were posed: (a) What had the greatest impact on Latina teachers' educational experiences? (b) How do Latina teachers make meaning of their decision to enter and persist in the teaching profession? (c) What are Latina teachers' perceptions of the role they play in students' educational experiences and outcomes? and (d) What can Latina teachers tell educational leaders about the recruitment, preparation, and retention of Latina teachers in rural Oregon.

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study, including (a) rationale for a qualitative research design, (b) rationale for theoretical frameworks and perspectives (c) rationale for *testimonio* methodology, (d) participants and procedures, (e) methods of data collection, (f) analysis and synthesis of data, (g) ethical considerations, and (h) the trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. This chapter finishes with a brief concluding summary.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

This researcher chose a qualitative research design to better understand the lived experiences of Latina teachers. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe qualitative research as interpretive, and as concerned with the socially constructed nature of reality, the close

relationships between the researcher and participants, and how the context of inquiry impacts research. Inquiry, they argue, is inherently value-laden, and the practices of qualitative research have the potential to “change the world” (Preface, p. x). Conversely, these same authors argue that quantitative methods are primarily concerned with the “measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables, not processes” (p. 8). The present study was interested in the process of *the unfolding of teacher trajectories* and in the influence of social and political landscapes on this process. This researcher believed that a qualitative research design was necessary to gain an in-depth understanding of the particular context of participants’ meaning-making of the research problem. Maxwell (2005) describes a qualitative design as interactive, with an ongoing reflexive process. This process requires the researcher to move iteratively between and among the components of research, simultaneously assessing “interconnection and interaction among different design components” (p. 3). The present study centered teachers’ lived experiences and expected multiple perspectives; these characteristics make this study better suited for a qualitative design employing inductive–deductive thinking (Creswell, 2013) than for a quantitative approach with a predetermined starting point or a linear or circular fixed sequence of steps focused on reporting outcomes.

Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions and the use of interpretive or theoretical frameworks that provide a framework for guiding a research approach. The basic beliefs that this researcher brought to the present study best matched a transformative worldview. Mertens (2009) defines the four basic beliefs that underlie the transformative paradigm as follows:

Axiology (i.e., the nature of ethics and values) —emphasizes human rights and social justice.

Ontology (i.e., the nature of reality)—rejects cultural relativism and acknowledges the influence and consequences of power and privilege in what is deemed real.

Epistemology (i.e., relationships)—advocates for culturally competent relations between the researcher/evaluator and community members.

Methodology (i.e., approach to systematic inquiry)—inclusion of qualitative methods is seen as critical; interactive link recognized between the researcher and participants in the definition of the focus and questions; methods are adjusted to accommodate cultural complexity; and contextual and historical factors are acknowledged, especially as they relate to discrimination and oppression.

Adapted from Mertens (2009, p. 45–49).

In light of the obvious need to rectify the teacher diversity gap, the present study was shaped by the researcher's transformative paradigm and worldview (Mertens, 2009), which recognizes community strengths and which seeks to identify social justice themes. The researcher has authentic interest in collaborating with the participants to advocate for systematic and structural changes that will improve the participants' lives and their communities (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Rationale for Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives

Theoretical or interpretive frameworks inform research problems, research questions, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and recommendations (Creswell, 2013). Mertens (2009) explains that critical theories match the transformative paradigm, and when “used to frame a study, then a deliberate and conscious design can reveal the positive aspects, resilience, and acts of resistance needed to promote social change” (p. 18). Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used in the present study to understand how race and racism embedded in society, hegemonic

education policies, and nationalistic views continue to oppress people of color and limit their access to higher education (Bell, 1980; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Delgado Bernal & Stefancic, 2001).

To move beyond a black–white binary perspective, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) advance the use of Latin@ Critical Race theory (LatCrit) in education research to reveal the multiple layers of racialized subordination that impact Latin@s in majority culture schools in the US. LatCrit was used in the present study to reveal the intersections of immigration history, educational inequities, race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, gender, sexuality, and geography that are unique to Latin@s and their experiences in education (Anzaldúa, 1987/2007; Delgado Bernal, et al., 2006). Mertens (2009) explains that it is at these multiple identity points that a LatCrit framework can be used to highlight how discrimination intersects with resistance as a means to address racism and multiple forms of marginalization.

A community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005) focuses on the cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities that are developed within communities of color. These various forms of capital are recognized as influencing persistence and social mobility (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010) and include

- Resistant Capital: challenge inequity and subordination
- Navigational Capital: maneuvering social institutions
- Social Capital: networks and community resources
- Linguistic Capital: communications in different languages or styles
- Familial Capital: cultural [and] family knowledge and history
- Aspirational Capital: aspirations and hope despite challenges

(Yosso, 2005, as cited in Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010, p. 4)

Using a community cultural wealth framework to analyze *testimonios* brings the various forms of capital that are used as resistance to inequities and as strategies to navigate oppressive systems to the surface. Together, these various forms of capital reveal counternarratives that disrupt deficit perspectives of communities of color.

In the present study, Chican@/Metiz@/Latin@ feminist theories and concepts of “cultural intuition” (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 563) were used as lenses to shape the research process and to understand the participants’ individual differences, multiple perspectives, interpretations, and recommendations (Creswell, 2013). The basic tenants of Chicana feminist epistemology are cultural strengths, mestiza consciousness (i.e., hybrid identity), sociocultural context marked by oppression, intersectionality of identity points of marginalized groups, social group identity, collective liberation, colonization through language, coping strategies, and the development of bicultural identity (Canales, 2012). Using critical race-gendered perspectives (Delgado Bernal, 2002) ensured collaboration with the participants, as well as this researcher’s reflexivity regarding power differentials, acknowledgement of positionality (i.e., outsider, listener, and ally), and commitment to social justice.

Lastly, this research was approached from an explicitly Pacific Northwestern perspective, acknowledging the historical contributions that Latin@ have made in the Northwest (Gamboa & Buan, 1995; Garcia & Garcia, 2005; Maldonado, 2000; May, 2011). This perspective recognizes the strengths in Latin@ communities and focuses the research on examining the structures and systems unique to the histories of rural Oregon communities, which maintain the status quo that privileges the dominant culture.

Rationale for *Testimonio* as Methodology

This study's qualitative research approach was best suited for a *testimonio* methodology. This methodology entails gathering in-depth oral stories told by individuals who have experienced injustices in connection with a collective experience of oppression and resistance. Rooted in oral cultures with traditions of storytelling, as well as in Latin American liberation struggles, these personal narratives have been used to document and expose specific and local injustices. These stories are marked by an urgent call for solidarity and social action (Beverly, 2004). This methodology was chosen to support the present study's transformative perspective and theoretical frameworks, and to confirm the subjective and political nature of the research problem and questions. *Testimonio* as methodology also provided a culturally relevant framework for the researcher-participant relationship (Mertens, 2009), and makes use of a collaborative method of analysis (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012).

The objective of using the *testimonio* methodology—a liberationist research approach (Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012)—in the present study was to reveal and denounce educational injustices, to empower the participants by providing a platform for their voices and their stories, and to advocate for educational equity. This multifaceted methodology fit well with the present study because it sought to understand the systematic and structural factors that maintain the underrepresentation of Latina teachers, and to call for social and political change, in the form of a teaching force that reflects the diversity of the student population.

Educational research studies relevant to the present study that have made use of *testimonio* have included the voices of both undocumented and US-born Latina college students (Huber, 2010), young adults (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010), school-age Latino students (Fernandez, 2002), Latin@ bilingual teachers (Prieto, 2009), Chicana activist teachers (Burstein

& Montañó, 2012), Chicana teacher educators (Prieto & Villenas, 2012), community-based Latin@ educators and Latin@ parents (Guzman-Martinez, 2011), Native American community educators (Gondara, 2005), and the *testimonios* of Chican@ parents (Auerbach, 2002). In these studies, the participants' *testimonios* act as counter-narratives to hegemonic educational policies and practices, and address the inequalities that participants they experience in schools. Auerbach (2002) argues that *testimonio* research, which features compelling contextual stories, is more effective in persuading policymakers to enact reforms than are statistical reports. Tellers of stories, Beverley (2004) and Riessman (2008) explain, can always get someone to write on their behalf; since *testimonio*, on the other hand, will always be subjective, it serves less to pin down the individual facts and more to retell the impact of the themes of the story. The present study fit well with this change agenda, as it sought to place Latina teachers' trajectory into and persistence in the teacher workforce at the center of the inquiry, making personal memories the essential element (Reys & Rodriguez, 2012).

Reflecting on the role of the researcher, Chase (2010) explains that creating public spaces where the narratives of marginalized groups can be heard can promote opportunities for small-scale, localized social change. *Testimonio* methodology privileges personal narratives, and the narrator *testimonialista* (i.e., one giving *testimonio*) is recognized as the "holder of knowledge" (Delgado Bernal et. al, 2012, p. 365). The role of the researcher is one of "empathetic listener" (Gergen & Gergen, 2007 as cited in Case, 2011, pg. 428), second-hand witness, ally, and activist (Delgado Bernal et. al, 2012) with the job of bringing the narrative to a broader audience. Haig-Brown (2003) asserts that *testimonio* situates the researcher within "impossible knowledge [...] knowledge that is beyond our grasp because of the limits of our language and our lived

experience” (p. 415). This knowledge requires the researcher to adjust “assumptions and listen differently [...] beyond our cultural and social imaginations and epistemologies” (p. 418).

The transformative paradigm, with its goal of social justice, also influences the researcher–participant relationship. *Testimonio* methodology was a good fit for the present study as it situates both the participant and the researcher in a collaborative dialogic research process to bring attention to the conditions of Latina teachers’ trajectories. Understanding the meaning attached to these conditions demands a narrator–listener relationship built on respect (Haig-Brown, 2003), trust (Mertens, 2009), and the researcher’s acknowledgement of the limits of his or her to their understanding of another’s story (Case, 2011). These constructs allowed the present study’s participants space to narrate their life-events, to have their story heard, re-cast their story in the affirmative, and to engage in extended dialogue with the researcher. Mertens (2009) states the need for the researcher to make methodological decisions with a “conscious awareness of the contextual and historical factors, especially as they relate to discrimination and oppression” (p. 59) within a particular community. Establishing a trusting researcher–participant relationship was important in the present study in order for the central focus to remain on dismantling dominant deficit perspectives of the underrepresentation of Latina teachers and documenting resistances and motivation as information of value to both the Latin@ community and to Latina teacher recruitment and retention.

The present study fit well with the multifaceted objectives of *testimonio* because it sought to make space for Latina teachers to speak, to be heard, and connect their individual stories to a broader story of the impacts resulting from the teacher diversity gap and demand social change.

Participants and Procedures

This researcher used a purposeful sampling method to select the participants for the present study. A purposeful sampling procedure was best suited to producing rich cases that would yield an in-depth understanding (Patton, 2002) about the teacher diversity gap. Creswell (2013) asserts that research approaches that focus on stories or narratives require the researcher to reflect on whom to sample based on the stories they have to tell, and on how these stories relate to the phenomenon under study. A *testimonio* methodology specifies that the individuals selected have the desire to speak for social justice (Reyes & Rodriguez, 2012).

The sample for the present study was drawn from the geographic area of the study (i.e., site level; Creswell, 2013), which comprised four counties in Central and Eastern Oregon. Sampling at the participant level (Creswell, 2013), this researcher sought to include individuals from a variety of public school and education service districts who taught at various grade levels for diverse content areas. The researcher also sought to include instructors of special programs, such as English as a Second Language, to ensure that multiple perspectives (Mertens, 2009) would inform a collective understanding of the lived experiences of Latina teacher trajectories. In addition, the researcher chose to include educators in private schools, as well as school counselors.

A combination of networking sampling (Delgado Bernal, 1997; Gándara, 1995, as cited in Huber, 2010) and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) strategies were employed. Network sampling was used to contact “resource individuals” (Huber, 2010, p. 72). These resource individuals were educators and adult learners who worked in schools and who attended local colleges in the research area. The researcher asked these resource individuals to share the researcher’s contact information and a brief description of the research topic with other potential

participants. The researcher chose this initial recruitment strategy to establish a sense of trust between individuals and the researcher; such a strategy was also necessary given the low number of Latina teachers in rural Oregon schools. In addition, a snowball sampling strategy was used in asking participants to refer other Latina educators who might be interested in participating in the study. The sample for the present study comprised nine Latina educators. The criteria for selection of participants comprised:

- Having (a) an active Oregon Teaching license or School Counselor license, (b) a Bachelor's degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Development, or Early Childhood Education, or (c) an appropriate state license for home day school.
- Being an educator or school counselor in an Oregon preschool, primary school, or secondary school, or having retired from working in a preschool, primary school, or secondary school within the last three years.
- Being a full-time resident of Central or Eastern Oregon for at least five years.
- Self-identifying as Chicana, Latina, or Hispanic (US native or foreign born).
- Being interested in this project. (Appendix A)

The participants' backgrounds were important to the context of this study, and ensured that they had navigated US schools and university systems, passed standardized tests, experienced school hiring and evaluations, and experienced living in a new Latin@ diaspora community situated in rural Oregon. This researcher tried to capture the variability among the Latin@ community by including native and non-native born participants, and by asking participants to self-identify in terms of their ethnicity, and gender identity. The demographic characteristics of the participants are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonym	Age range	Place of birth	First language (other languages)	High school graduation location	First-generation college student	Higher education entry (2-year or 4-year institution)	Location, public or private	Highest degree	Subject(s) taught	Years teaching (in Oregon)
Rezi	60+	Texas	Spanish (English)	California	yes	2-year	California, private	Bachelor of Arts	Early Childhood Development	40 (30)
Lola	40–49	Oregon	Spanish (English)	Oregon	yes	4-year	Oregon, public	Bachelor of Arts	Elementary Education	18 (18)
Miriam	40–49	Mexico	Spanish (English)	Mexico	yes	2-year in Mexico 2-year in US	Mexico, public; Oregon, public	Bachelor of Science	Spanish, Bilingual K–5 Education	7 (7)
Michelle	40–49	California	English (Spanish & French)	California	yes	2-year	California, public	Master of Education	Elementary Education, Dual Language	13 (10)
Sonia	60+	Texas	Spanish (English)	California	yes	4-year	Oregon, private	Bachelor of Science	Elementary Education	26 (26)
Maya	30–39	Oregon	English (Spanish)	Wisconsin (K–9, Oregon)	yes	4-year	Wisconsin, public	Master of Arts	English Language Learning	9 (8)
Norma	40–49	California	English (Spanish)	California	no	4-year	California, public	Master of Arts	English Language Learning	7 (7)
Glemer	40–49	Colombia	Spanish (English & French)	Colombia	no	4-year	Colombia, public	Master of Arts	English Language Learning, Spanish	16 (8)
Rosa	30–39	Oregon	English (Spanish)	Oregon	yes	4-year	California, private	Master of Arts	Science, High School Counselor	8 (8)

In qualitative studies the relationship between the researcher and the participants requires a critical consideration of power and privilege (Mertens, 2009). In the present study, this researcher had neither a professional relationship with participants nor a past supervisory role; the sample selection was therefore not thought to pose significant ethical concerns. In light of Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) assertion that there is no such thing as a value-free inquiry, this researcher's social location and social justice intentions were described in the solicitation of the sample.

The prospective participants were contacted by email, in which they were sent a Recruitment Letter (see Appendix B) and an Informed Consent form (see Appendix C). They were asked if they would be interested in volunteering to participate in the present study. They received follow-up telephone calls and emails to confirm their interest in the study, schedule the initial interview meeting times, and discuss the procedures for follow-up conversations. They were asked to

- Complete and return the Informed Consent Form (See Appendix C) and the Sample Selection Criteria form (See Appendix A).
- Participate in one face-to-face, one-on-one *testimonio* interview (60–90 minutes)
- Complete a Demographic Data Sheet (see Appendix D; 10 minutes)
- Review an interview transcript (sent as email attachment) for accuracy (30 minutes)
- Participate in a follow-up audio-recorded telephone dialogue to confirm the accuracy of their *testimonio*, provide further clarifying details, and participate in analysis of developing themes (40–60 minutes)
- Review a draft of the findings (sent as email attachment; 30 minutes)
- Sign and return a consent form for researcher use of participant quotes
- Email researcher with final feedback or revisions (20 minutes)
- Confirm via email that they have received a copy of the finding
- Participate in analysis, interpretations, and recommendations (60–90 minutes)

Research Design and Methods of Data Collection

The present study was informed by an initial and ongoing review of the literature related to the sociohistorical and sociopolitical context of Latin@ education, cultural theories, and adult learning theories. A review of the literature related to the research process included

transformative research, critical theories, Chicana feminist epistemology, the community cultural wealth framework, narrative inquiry, *testimonio* methodology and method, and counter-story telling. Following the initial literature review and the dissertation committee's approval of the study proposal, this researcher acquired the approval of the Lesley University Institutional Review Board. This process included submission of the recruitment letter, confidentiality processes, informed consent, and interview guide. An ongoing review of literature was guided by the *testimonios*.

Methods of data collection. *Testimonio* interviews were the primary data collection method in this qualitative study. Descriptive data about the participants were gathered using a Demographic Data Sheet. A research journal was used during data collection and analysis to write memos related to the interview context and to record thoughts about the voices of the participants. Additional documents included school newsletters and website information, as well as a college newsletter article provide by one participant. This information served to inform the collective data analysis.

Pilot study. *Testimonio* interviews were tested in the researcher's pilot study. Three female Mexican American teachers (two US national origin, one of Mexican national origin) participated in the research. The pilot study provided an opportunity to test *testimonio* interviews and to gain feedback from the participants on the interview questions. The narrative analysis method of restorying (Creswell, 2008) was employed. The research site was located in rural eastern Washington state, in as area with demographics similar to those of the dissertation study site (e.g., central and eastern Oregon). These data and the suggestions from the doctoral committee members were used to shape the final interview guide (Appendix C) and to inform the conceptual framework for the present study. The changes to the guide resulted in the addition of

two loosely structured interview questions intended to frame the environmental context of the *testimonio* within the new Latin@ diaspora of rural Oregon and to center the intention of the *testimonio* on the teacher trajectory. These questions were followed by prompts intended to inform the study's four research questions and to encourage dialogue between the participants and the researcher. The pilot study confirmed that encouraging lengthy dialogic discourse provided an in-depth understanding of emerging themes along the teacher trajectory. The pilot study participants also provided feedback on the research questions. This feedback was used to rephrase the research questions and to ensure that the interview questions were positive, focused on structural and systematic factors and power relations, enlisted an asset-based perspective, and promoted social justice (Canales, 2012).

In the pilot study, this researcher used a narrative method of restorying; i.e., the retelling of the participants stories through a chronological unfolding of the teacher trajectory (Creswell, 2008). LatCrit and Community Cultural Wealth lenses were used to expose the intersectionality of injustices, the importance of cultural knowledge, and the social and political urgency of the teacher diversity gap. However, the pilot study also revealed that restorying the participants' *testimonios* put into question whose voices were privileged and heard—the researcher's or the participants'. Furthermore, the participants in this study were teachers whom this researcher believed to have the capacity to author their own stories. It became apparent that restorying nine *testimonios* would depart from the objective of telling a collective story. After discussions with the dissertation committee, a department faculty member, and additional review of the literature on *testimonio* methodology, this researcher altered the research design, believing that restorying *testimonios* in the present study was counter to the method of truth-telling. This restorying also encouraged a "facile reading" (Haig-Brown, 2003, p. 428) of lived experiences, which might not

address the urgency of the research problem or the transformative goals for the study. Members of oral cultures may expect more patience from the interlocutor and respect readers' and listeners' individual meaning making. Haig-Brown (2003) writes that,

One of the lessons of traditional First Nations storytelling is that the listener translates the story so that it has relevance to her own context while also maintaining its integrity and intentionality. [... However,] mindfulness cannot stop with reading the story from a non-Aboriginal perspective but, rather, must struggle to move beyond its limits (p. 428)

Therefore, with the dissertation committee's approval, a thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) was combined with the interpretive frameworks of LatCrit and Community Cultural Wealth to detail the themes of injustice and resistance that emerged from within and across individual stories. The findings were then discussed through a collective counter-story of the participants' progress through the teacher trajectory—from P-12 education, through college, and then as a teacher—as described later in this chapter in the data analysis section (see p. 56).

Testimonio interviews. *Testimonio* as data collection method was selected in the present study because it was felt that the “political urgency” (Delgado Bernal et. al, 2012, p. 363) of the Latina teacher gap would be best understood by eliciting what Beverly (2004) calls emergency narratives where “the situation of narration ... has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival, implicated in the act of narration itself” (p. 32). These narratives have the potential to expose examples of social and educational policies and practices that affect Latina teacher trajectories, and to recast deficit and colorblind discourses as transformational resistances.

Haig-Brown (2003) argues that *testimonio* “may allow people to tell their stories with less intervention, interruption, and interpretation than do typical interviews” (p. 416). The Latina Feminist Group describes *testimonio* as a means to highlight how Latinas’ “individual identities express the complexities of our [Latin@] communities as a whole” (p. 20). To align the present study with this thinking, this researcher chose *testimonio* as a respectful research method for engaging with the participants as an outsider promoting social change.

***Testimonio* interview process.** The researcher sent emails to the nine participants who agreed to volunteer for the study and confirmed the date, time, and location for the interviews. Prior to the interviews each participant signed the Informed Consent Form and the Sample Selection Criteria form. Eight of the initial interviews were conducted face to face: four interviews were held in a public library meeting room, three at participants’ homes, and one at a participant’s school. The ninth interview was conducted via Skype. Interviews lasted from one to two hours.

The *testimonio* interviews began with the question of how the participant came to be in Oregon. This opening question encouraged a life story that included immigration history, educational trajectories, and current teaching position. The second question was used as an alternate or probe question (Creswell, 2013) to prompt a big-picture story related to the research problem (See Appendix C: Interview Guide). The interview guide was more useful in some interviews than in others. In two cases, this researcher only used the first two questions to follow the *testimonialista*’s story. These two interviews lasted two hours, with intensive interactions between the participants and the researcher. As a beginner researcher, this process required great patience and a willingness to engage the participants in a reflexive process to explore the deeper meaning of their experiences (Case, 2011 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The *testimonios* were

audiotaped with breaks as needed if participants experienced painful emotions. At the end of each interview, the participant was asked to complete the Demographic Data Sheet and the researcher provided the procedures for follow-up communications. The audiotaped interviews were then transcribed verbatim.

Methods of analysis. Analysis and data collection took place simultaneously and began with organizing data files for each participant. All data were kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. After each testimonio interview, this researcher listened to the audio taped *testimonios* twice, making analytic notes of key elements that surfaced in the participants' stories. This first phase of analysis focused on listening to what was being said conceptually rather than the precise words, so as to not miss important themes due to nuances in language (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012). This process supported analyzing the *testimonios* as a whole story.

The field notes were rewritten, adding informal observational and contextual data via rich descriptions. Documents collected from the interview site or those provided by the participants were reviewed for contextual information and cultural nuances (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The participants' demographic data, which was collected at the end of the first interview, was reviewed, tabulated, and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The participants were identified by self-selected pseudonyms. At this preliminary stage, all data were reviewed to confirm a link to the research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2013).

The audiotaped *testimonios* were then transcribed verbatim, along with parenthetical notation of non-verbal communication such as laughter, crying, long silences, or quick shifts off topic. The transcripts were read to get a feel for the participants' voices and stories and to become familiar with the written text. The text was then coded by hand to identify examples or

units of analysis (Foss & Waters, 2007; Riessman, 2008) in the *testimonios* that helped to answer the research questions. The research questions were interconnected and chronologically connected to the teacher trajectory (Czarniawska, 2004). A coding process described by Foss and Waters (2007) was combined with an analytic category development process outlined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012). An initial coding schema was developed using words spoken by the participants. For example, when participants described their educational experiences, they often spoke of being discouraged from speaking Spanish (or even forbidden or penalized) as a child in US schools; some participants also faced this prohibition in their homes. In all such cases this was coded as "SP not allowed." Some units of analysis were given more than one code. These processes resulted in the development of a broad list of the codes that was reviewed for redundancy or similarities, appropriateness for informing the research questions, and outliers (Foss & Waters, 2007). Member checking was utilized by providing the participants with a copy of their *testimonio* interview transcript and scheduling a second interview to discuss any changes or additions to their responses. This collaborative phase of analysis gave the participants and the researcher an opportunity to ask clarifying questions and to engage in dialogue around emerging themes. The follow-up interviews lasted between forty and ninety minutes, and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All of the participants endorsed their transcripts as valid accounts of their individual stories.

The next step was to cut out the coded units of analysis from the transcripts that had been color-coded and line numbered to more easily identify participants' quotes. Forty-two envelopes were labeled with code names, and all excerpts representing these codes were placed into the envelopes. Excerpts with more than one code were reviewed for their relevancy and strength as a possible quote, and were then placed in the most appropriate envelope. The coded envelopes

were arranged under the research questions. This process resulted in changes to the coding schema as several codes were collapsed, developed with emerging data from ongoing conversations with participants, or determined to be unrelated to the research questions or problem. The final coding schema resulted in seven codes related to Research Question 1, and two codes each representing Research Questions 2, 3, and 4. Using a large blank wall, the envelopes were arranged under categories representing the four research questions, and the enclosed excerpts were taken out and taped under their respective coded envelopes. The excerpts were reviewed and rearranged to develop an explanatory story of emerging themes. The strongest quotes were identified for use in the findings and discussion chapters.

In the third read of the *testimonios*, this researcher listened to the participants' voices and stories; Critical Race Theory, Chicana Critical Race Theory, and a Community Cultural Wealth model were used as analytic lenses to understand the participants' meaning-making of the coded recurring concepts as they related to race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, and geography. This process helped to identify emerging collective themes situated within "broader social narratives" (Murray, 2003, p. 108) from the data. These perspectives also provided a framework for interpreting themes of oppression unique to Latin@s and their experiences in formal education, and for highlighting strengths and strategies of resistance.

This researcher acknowledged the assumptions that had influenced the analytical process and shared them with the participants during follow-up conversations to discuss emerging themes. The goal of these member-check conversations was to open dialogue about the unique intersectionality of these themes (Anzaldua, 1987), and to explore the complex experiences of Latina teachers. This collaborative analysis phase focused attention on the interconnecting themes that had emerged from individual and cross-case analyses of stories (Creswell, 2008,

2013; Patten, 2002). Through this process, the participants and researcher made space to see the data in different ways. The participants' epistemological perspectives and cultural intuition added a lens of analysis that deepened the knowledge construction on the basis of lived experiences, and framed an outline for a collective counter-story advocating for social change to improve the number of Latina teachers.

This researcher reviewed the evolving themes and conceptual framework with the dissertation committee, reviewed the written reflections made in the researcher's journal for evidence of these themes (Maxwell, 2005), and reviewed related literature. A final version of the findings included lengthy participant-approved quotes from *testimonios*, and noted themes that emerged from the collective analysis of the participants' stories.

Ethical Issues

Ethical concerns for studying non-dominant cultural groups required making a case to the Lesley University Institutional Review Board that harm would be limited under the proposed research design. Consideration was given to the possibility that emotional pain could surface in participants as they recounted stories that included suffering and marginalization. Any such stories recorded during the *testimonio* interviews were dealt with in a respectful way by offering the participants time for silence or more space to move away from the research topic.

The selected study procedures ensured that participants understood their right to withdraw participation at any time. The measures to protect the privacy of the participants were disclosed in the invitation for volunteer participation and in the consent form. The findings and discussion used participants' chosen pseudonyms, and their teaching sites were not identified. All participants received a copy of the findings and discussion chapters, and were asked to ensure both that their identities had been adequately disguised, and that they approved of the use

of their narrative segments. All participants were also provided a second informed consent form requesting permission to use narrative segments from their *testimonios*. Riessman (2008) suggests implementing this practice of repeated consent forms to establish an ethical research relationship, and Josselson (2007) asserts the need for narrative researchers to establish an “ethical attitude [...] a stance that involves thinking through these matters and deciding how best to honor and protect those who participate in one’s studies while still maintaining standards for responsible scholarship” (p. 538). To protect participants’ anonymity, all research data were stored electronically in password-protected files on a secure hard drive.

A transformative narrative design such as *testimonio* methodology implies a focus on *conscientizacao* (i.e., critical consciousness); through their *testimonios*, the participants described their educational and career experiences, denounced oppression, engaged in dialogue, and—through their published counter-stories—contributed to social change. Throughout the research process, this researcher worked with the participants to identify possible audiences for the findings and to discuss what it might be like for an audience to hear and be changed by their stories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Co-creating knowledge for reform and engaging the participants in shaping the final research report and recommendations addressed ethical issues of representation (Creswell, 2013). In addition, this researcher continually self-reflected on bias, privilege, and power, and respected the participants’ own constructions of identity.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Purposeful sampling and volunteer participation increased the credibility of the study. Working with the participants required this researcher to navigate a position of power, and one of being a cultural outsider, ally, and activist (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Mertens, 2009). An

awareness of researcher identity was essential to validate participants' realities and the realities of the communities to which they belong (Brabeck, 2001; Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012).

Using a *testimonio* methodology centers participants as knowers, and encourages participant engagement throughout the research process, which supports the validation of the research findings. *Testimonio* interviews are intentionally political stories of lived experiences that reveal collective memories of oppression, and that support writing rich, thick descriptions of contexts and themes using lengthy narrative segments. These descriptions include quotes and interconnecting details that draw out the intended meaning of the participants' stories, and that provide enough detail that the listener (i.e., the present study's researcher, interlocutor, and ally), readers (i.e., those in the participants' communities where the stories have the potential to change lives), and audience members (i.e., those for whom the story is told to make change) can witness another person's story as part of a collective experience; these individuals can then make meaning of what is transferable to their contexts. It was not this project's intention to uncover objective facts or to generalize interventions that could be applied to all contexts, but rather to make these stories available to a wider audience (Beverly, 2004; Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

A transformative epistemology moved validation beyond "documenting the production of inequitable circumstances" (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012, p. 31) and into the co-construction of knowledge with the participants. Such a stance towards the creation of knowledge emphasizes both the historical discourses of the communities under study and the reflexive nature of research. Making space for the participants' voices to speak and be heard helps others in their communities to understand the systematic and structural challenges that unfairly impact Latinas' chances to fulfill a teacher trajectory; these *testimonios* can offer

strategies for making changes to their situations. Lather (1986) refers to this as catalytic validity as “the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants towards knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire called *conscientization*” (p. 272).

This research project did not intend to follow a Participatory Action Research (PAR) design garnering full engagement with the Latin@ community; however advocacy research such as the present study runs the risk of “merely serving the status quo [or] reinscrib[ing] existing colonial relations through control of the agenda and the inability of institutional inequities to respond to communit[ies] needs and wishes” (Haig-Brown, 2003, p. 424).

To address these concerns, other validation strategies (Creswell, 2013) were employed, such as triangulation of data sources (i.e., *testimonio* interviews, on-going literature review, contextual observation, supplementary documentation provided by participants, pilot study results, research journal memos), eliciting additional perspectives (i.e., discussing finding and results with participants, engaging participants in writing actionable recommendations), and drawing on the researcher’s professional experience.

Limitations

Some of the limitations in this study are inherent in qualitative studies. These include concerns about representation, participant reactivity (Maxwell, 2005), and researcher biases. Further, studies relying primarily on *testimonios* have historically been questioned due to the performance stance of the stories, and due to how the urgency of being heard may—however unintentionally—distort the truth. In the present study, this researcher was specifically concerned that explicitly soliciting stories that informed the research questions may have affected the stories told by participants.

From the beginning of this study, the researcher struggled with representation recognizing the limitations of using socially constructed umbrella identity terms such as “Chicana,” “Latina,” “Mexican American women,” and “Hispanic”; this researcher also saw the risk of reifying the myth of homogeneity among cultural groups. In addition, the influences of sociocultural factors such as ethnicity, class, immigration history, national origin, language, religion, politics, gender, sexuality, sexual identity, and geography further stretched the term “Latina teachers” and the notion of their underrepresentation as a group. To account for these concerns regarding identity representation, this researcher used the most commonly selected self-identifier from the demographic data sheets—Latina, and added the inclusive “@” to promote gender neutrality and to interrupt gender binaries (Gutiérrez, 2013).

Participant reactivity (Maxwell, 2005) to the researcher may have been a limitation in this study. The high value placed on *personalismo* (i.e., warm exchanges) and *respeto* (i.e., respect) may have influenced the participants’ responses to interview questions (Canales, 2012). The researcher employed respectful engagement procedures that included establishing trust through snowball sampling techniques, informal conversations prior to interviews, allowing for introductory conversations prior to beginning formal interviews, and respecting participants’ personal, family, and work commitments by rescheduling interviews or follow-up discussions as needed. In addition, the researcher fully explained that the goal of using *testimonio* interviews was to privilege the participants’ voices, cultural intuition, knowledge, skills, and abilities, and to establish respect for their stories.

The researcher’s biases and level of cultural competency can influence the interpretation of data. Throughout the present study, this researcher therefore continued to develop cultural sensitivity skills by substitute teaching in bilingual schools and in schools with high percentages

of Latin@ students. This researcher also attended cultural events hosted by the local Latin@ community, read popular and academic literature by Latin@ authors and scholars, listened to Latin@ radio programming, studied Mexican and Mexican American cultural values, attended immigrant integration community organizing groups, and kept abreast to developing state-level policies (i.e., Tuition Equity—in-state tuition; driver cards for undocumented immigrants) and US national-level immigration politics (i.e., Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents; Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) as they impact undocumented Latin@ students' chances to obtain higher education and enter a teaching career. A researcher's biases can result in making claim about participants' lives that may seem plausible, but which are not aligned with the way participants see their own lives (Chase, 2011; Riessman, 2008). For this reason, this researcher used lengthy narrative segments from the participants' testimonios and maintained on-going conversations and member-checks throughout the research process. Analysis included discussions between the researcher and participants to clarify differences between what participants reported and what the researcher expected to hear. These expectations were based on literature review, as well as on years of professional exposure to hegemonic deficit discourses explaining the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in Oregon's rural communities.

Chapter Summary

A qualitative transformative *testimonio* approach was chosen to explore the missing representation of Latina teachers in Oregon K–12 rural schools. This methodology privileged the voices of the participants and guided the research design. The participant sample was purposefully selected and comprised nine Latina teachers. Three data collection methods were used: *testimonio* interviews, document analysis, and researcher journaling. The participants'

stories of lived experiences along the teacher trajectory were told, witnessed, documented, and explored to identify emerging themes within and across their *testimonios*. The data were reviewed repeatedly in light of the relevant literature, researcher reflexivity, and on-going epistemologically informed dialogic conversations with the participants; this repeated review resulted in interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations.

The political and urgent nature of the research problem drove the decision to use the theoretical lenses of LatCrit and the Community Cultural Wealth model to construct collective counter-narratives highlighting experiences of educational and social inequities, resistances, and motivations to counter hegemonic discourses used to explain the Latina teacher gap. The goal of this study was to make space for often-silenced voices to speak, listen, document lived experiences, and promote solidarity for social change. This social change has the potential to improve participants' lives, their communities, and Latina teacher recruitment and retention.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this *testimonio* study was to explore Latina teachers' perceptions of the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in Oregon K–12 schools. The researcher sought to obtain a better understanding of Latina teachers' educational experiences, decision to enter and persist in the teacher workforce, perceptions of the role they play in students' educational experiences and outcomes, and perceptions of the recruitment and retention of Latina teachers. This information could be used to challenge deficit perspectives on the Latina teacher gap and could assist university–school–community partnerships, in making empirically based decisions regarding the recruitment, preparation, and retention of Latina teachers. Finally, this information could assist schools in understanding and respecting cultural sensitivity, as well as the need for a pluralist language orientation, two essential skills for helping schools address the increasing diversity of students and families—in particular, the growing Latin@ K–12 student population in Oregon. This chapter presents the four key findings derived from 18 *testimonio* interviews ($N = 9$; each participant was interviewed twice), a demographic survey, document analysis, and the researcher's journal.

Finding 1. All nine women reported the same four factors as having had profound impacts on their educational experiences: socioeconomic status, language and culture, hostile responses to their Latina identity, and allies.

Finding 2. All nine women saw teaching as a way to achieve personal transformation, to fight against social injustices and educational inequities, and to give back to their communities.

Finding 3. All nine women played valuable roles as Latina teachers in creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces.

Finding 4. All nine women viewed the recruitment of Latinas to the profession of teaching as fraught with challenges. They believed that recruitment and retention could be improved by giving greater value to Latina teachers' perspectives, cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The following discussion of the findings situates the participants' personal experiences and perceptions within a collective story that unfolds from their *testimonios*. The use of the participants' actual words highlights the value of their experiences and knowledge and seeks to exemplify transformative research, inquiry that empowers participants and advocates for social change based on their experiences. Pseudonyms are used to protect participant anonymity. Along with statements from the participants' *testimonios*, their current teaching position, background of their educational trajectory, and contextual forces are included to help readers understand their experiences and perceptions.

Findings 1: Impacts on Educational Experiences

All of the women's *testimonios* contained responses that describe how socioeconomic status, language and culture, and hostile reactions to their Latina identity, as well as the influences of allies, have shaped their educational experiences throughout their educational journey. These findings are significant because the participants remembered experiences that mirrored sociohistorical and sociopolitical accounts of Latin@ racial and economic stratification and resistance, in both American society in general and in the US school system, specifically. Based on the participants' descriptions, these factors appeared to be interrelated and contextually situated, and had a profound impact on their educational experiences.

In presenting Finding 1, subheadings are used to emphasize the impact of each factor on the participants' educational experiences. Examples from the participants' *testimonios* are used

to illustrate how the intersectionality of these factors is important to understanding their impact on educational experiences.

Socioeconomic status. Responses from the participants' *testimonios* illustrate how their socioeconomic status was influenced by both the US and the global sociopolitical landscapes. This status shaped their early learning experiences, perceptions of K–12 school quality and climate, and exposure to a college-going culture.

Early learning experiences. Sonia's story, below, illustrates how social inequities, contextual forces, and culturally and linguistically unresponsive schools made an impact on her early educational experiences.

Sonia, a semi-retired elementary school teacher who worked part-time with students who needed additional literacy instruction, was born in El Paso, Texas where her father worked at an oil refinery. Shortly after her birth, her family moved to Juárez, Mexico, and when she was five years old she moved with her grandparents and cousins to California to attend school, leaving behind her parents and siblings. After a few years of separation, Sonia's parents and her younger brother and sister immigrated to California. Sonia's parents found work in temporary low-paying factory jobs that did not promise her family long-term stability. Sonia recalls:

I went to my third elementary school and did not know much of what was going [on]. Still, I didn't understand very much English. ... I was really shy. I know that the teacher got really mad and put [a] little boy into the closet. ... She broke a broom because she was angry. And of course, I was scared out of my wits. [She went on to talk about her parents] My parents couldn't read to me. My dad wasn't that educated. They didn't know English. ... My parents worked really hard in the factories. ... They were very, very tired on the weekends. ... We weren't always poor. In Mexico, we weren't poor, I think. ...

But there was a lot of dysfunction in the house. ... And also at that time, there was a strike where my dad worked. You know, they were closed down or something.

She continued to speak of challenges in school:

Then, I changed schools again. It was [located in East Los Angeles, California] ... and we only lived there for a very short time. So by then, I had gone to ... five elementary schools. ... They always gave you tests ... and I always tested [poorly]. So, I was in the low track because I wasn't very smart. And I think I had a speech problem ... I know that some teacher put us in a small little room, and there must have been speech.

Sonia indicates that she was marginalized in school because of the interrelated factors of socioeconomic status, the sociopolitical conditions that challenged her family, and her school's unresponsiveness to culturally and linguistically different students. She explains how these experiences affected her academic confidence, lamenting that "I don't see myself as very smart, even to this day, even to this day."

Perceptions of school climate. Norma, an English Language Learning teacher, had experiences similar to those reported by Sonia. Norma was born in Sacramento, California. Her mother—a Mexican American who grew up in Texas, with family roots from Michoacán, Mexico, worked as a teacher. Her father was Anglo and college educated, but Norma recalled that "he couldn't really hold down a job for long." Norma's mother was her primary influence and support after her parents separated, around the time she entered middle school. Her mother made education and giving back to the community central priorities, despite struggling to raise three daughters on her own on a teacher's salary, and only being able to afford a home in a poor, high-crime neighborhood. An excerpt from Norma's *testimonio* shows how her socioeconomic

status and low-income neighborhood placed her in an underfunded violent middle school. There, she felt alienated from her underperforming peers and by the school's unresponsiveness to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Norma describes these experiences:

I remember being scared. It was a high-crime school, and I remember these were teachers who were sort of cruel to the students. I remember a couple of incidences where a child had masking tape wrapped around his head and was put into a closet. I remember students getting chains and hitting teachers. So, it was dangerous. I remember being afraid to go to school. But I just kept to myself and I was pretty shy, so I just sort of kept to myself and did my studies.

When Norma moved closer to a wealthier neighborhood and attended a primarily Anglo school with more resources, her academic achievement no longer set her apart; she excelled academically and joined extracurricular groups. However, she still felt isolated from her peers due to her socioeconomic status and the school's unresponsiveness to culturally and linguistically diverse students and families. Even though her mother was a teacher, she still felt unwelcome and an outcast at school meetings and in social groups.

Norma explains:

I was successful because, for the first time, I was able to integrate, because of my academic skills, with wealthier kids. For the first time, I went into houses that I didn't even know existed with pillars in the front and game rooms. I had never seen anything like that. ... I met kids who went skiing, who went on vacations. ... They had an exchange program. All of my friends were selected to go to Europe. I was heart broken. I was selected [to go to Ecuador] ... and I went, but I felt really different. We didn't have money and the other students that were going on these exchange programs were from

these very wealthy families. I remember going to these meetings with my mother and she didn't say a word and we were both in these wealthier settings that we were not used to. ... My skin isn't very dark; I've always been able to pass as Anglo if I wanted to. I felt that my identity changed when my mother was present because she was dark skinned. ... I never felt completely a part of the group, even though maybe they would say they were friends, but I did feel isolated a little bit from them. I mean, these were families that had grown up in a really different way than I had and their parents were different. I mean, even when the groups would get together, just the way the moms socialized was really different. And I remember my mom being silent, very silent, at some of these meetings. And I had just learned from other experiences that, you know, she was different from the other mothers. And I remember sometimes being embarrassed.

This quote illustrates how Norma's socioeconomic status and her school's unresponsiveness to culturally and linguistically different students shaped her educational experiences by denying her access to safe and welcoming schools.

Level of exposure to a college-going culture. Rosa provides another example of how socioeconomic status—specifically her parents' educational background and socioeconomic conditions—impacted her educational opportunities. Rosa, currently a high-school counselor, spent much of her early childhood traveling with her family in Oregon to her father's worksites “in the woods” where “he skidded logs and ran heavy equipment” (Rosa). Her father was Mexican American and her mother was Anglo; neither were college educated. Rosa graduated as valedictorian of her rural high-school class and had dreams of attending college, but never discussed them with her parents. She remembers:

There wasn't the talk [at school] of, ... "If you're going to go to college these are the classes you're going to take to prepare you". ... [And] we [she and her parents] never talked about college. We never talked about what I was going to do after high school. I always knew I wanted to go to college. ... And I knew we didn't have the money for college. ... When they closed down the woods in Oregon, my dad went to work for a company that worked [throughout the] Western United States. So, he was gone quite a bit my senior year. ... They said school was important and, you know, praised us for our grades and all that kind of stuff, but they didn't ever ... they weren't ever supplying the information because they didn't know the information, I would assume. ... It didn't even occur to me that you visit colleges, like I didn't even think about [it] ... you know, because it all came down to money. I mean, money...

In her *testimonio*, Rosa shares how she felt alienated from the college-going process. She perceived her family's socioeconomic status as limiting her access to college, and her parents as simply not having the information she needed. Further, her small, rural school did not provide her with college-related resources or impart a college-going culture. Rosa's socioeconomic status, home culture, and school culture were not aligned with a college-going culture built on assumptions of middle-class normality. In the forthcoming section on allies and mentors, I will include what Rosa said about how others in her community supported her acts of resistance to social inequities and her first-generation student status.

Glemer provides another perspective that highlights how her family's socioeconomic status, her home culture, and her school culture made a critical impact on her early learning, school climate, and exposure to a college-going culture. Glemer, a high-school Spanish teacher,

grew up in Colombia and came to the US as a political asylum seeker. Both of her parents were teachers with strong social networks at the secondary and university levels. She attended private schools through high school and selective public universities for her bachelor's and master's degrees. She considers herself privileged to have received high quality educational experiences. She explains:

I come from, I'll say, middle class, working middle ... my mom and my dad [are college-educated]. So, all of us have that goal in life to be professional and do the same or better. ... I went to private school, elementary and high school, all my brothers and sisters as well. With two parents working and having a decent salary, it was possible and was actually the best private school in town, not the most expensive but one of the best of the best because they had the high technology and best teachers and a lot of things. It was kind of a big school and connected to other schools around the world, Spain. They were always into the research, what is the best thing, what is the latest, you know, method or techniques or strategies that work, and we were always ahead ... and I was lucky, I think.

Glemer goes on to talk about college:

We had to fight really hard to get into public universities because I knew, [for] my mom and my dad, it was impossible with five kids to get a private education at the university level. And the private is not as good as the public university because the public, they have better teachers, and—I don't know why—and the reputation is that the public is better, you know. The private is not as good. So, we were raised with that awareness, I mean, knowing that we should pass the test to get into a [public] university; otherwise, we wouldn't be able to study. So we were good students fighting all the time really hard to get in, and we did, all of us.

As in Rosa's story, Glemer's statement illustrates how socio-cultural forces—socioeconomic status in particular—impacted participants' educational access and quality, school climate, and exposure to a college-going culture. All of this resulted in educational inequities for students from low-income working-class families.

Language and culture. All of the women in this study reported language and culture as playing important roles throughout their educational journey. For all of the seven US native-born women in this study, speaking Spanish was stigmatized upon entering school; in California, it was also restricted under English-only policies (Garcia, 2001). None of these women participated in English as a Second Language classes, either because English was their first language, or because they entered English immersion classrooms. Two women reported attending speech class despite the fact that they did not report having any true speech problems. The two women born outside of the US, both of whom were native Spanish language speakers, described similar experiences of marginalization and oppression as a result of being separated from their peers, as well as negative perceptions of multilingualism as adult English learners. The following examples from participants' *testimonios* illustrate these issues language-related challenges.

Rezi, an early learning educator, was born in Houston, Texas. Her parents were both Mexican and met working in the fields outside of a US border town. Rezi explained that after experiencing “prejudice toward Mexican people in the part of Texas” where they were living, her family, including her grandparents, moved to Sacramento, California. Rezi was an emergent bilingual student when she entered an English immersion classroom in her California school. In this statement from her *testimonio*, Rezi recalls how a teacher problematized her bilingual language development and isolated her from normal interactions:

We didn't have any special classes or anything. They just threw you in there and you ... had to go learn, learn as you went. ... Spanish was ... my primary language; at the time, that's all I spoke. ... I might have been in 5th or 6th grade, but the teacher decided because I was very quiet that I should learn to talk. And so, he said, "Well, since you're so quiet, we're going to have you go to all the classrooms and shout something in..." I don't know if he thought that that would work to get me to talk more, but it really didn't work. So, I would have to go shout something in the room so that I could see that it was not so hard to talk. ... Oh, just something like "Whoa horses!" or something, some silly thing, but at the top of my voice, he wanted me to do that, going from class to class. And so, I think at that point, I was still very quiet I don't think I kind of opened up more and got comfortable talking until probably ... it wasn't even in high school. It wasn't until after high school ... like, when I probably started junior college. That's when I started to be more open and, like, communicating and talking and things like that.

Rezi's oppressive experiences in English immersion classrooms contributed to feelings of self-doubt and years of self-silencing.

Michelle, an elementary school teacher working in a Spanish–English dual language classroom, described an experience similar to Rezi's; she too felt silenced, and it took her years to reclaim her Spanish language and affirm her *Mestiza* identity. Michelle was born in Los Angeles, California and attended private Catholic school until fifth grade. English was the dominant language spoken in her home. She had a vague memory of her parents speaking Spanish between themselves when she was very young, but her family only spoke in English to her and her sister. She and her sister were placed in schools which had primarily Anglo and

Asian students and in which English was the dominant language. She recalls, "It goes back to the context that my grandmother was raised in. Being [from a] Native American [background] was not a good thing... or... at that time, Hispanic or Spanish speaking was not a good thing." In high school she excelled in French and received praise from her teachers. However, it was not until college that she began to study Spanish. She recalls her dismay and confusion with the strikingly different responses she received when she spoke French or Spanish:

I lost all of my Spanish. ... It was an assimilation. It wasn't an acculturation. ... I remember asking my mom, ... "Why is it so beautiful if you say ... 'I speak French' as opposed to saying, 'I speak Spanish'?" There was this ideology, "Oh, you speak French. Oh, how wonderful." And if somebody spoke Spanish, it was like "Huh."

She goes on:

Well, she's [Michelle's mother] proud. I mean, she's totally proud because she always says how she wished she could have still kept it [Spanish]. She comes to my classroom and she volunteers, and I just ... now that I'm in the dual [language] immersion program, it feels like I'm coming home.

Michelle shared this lived experience of differential treatment with great pain in her voice. Her family's experience with restrictive language policies and social politics carried on as a collective memory for over three generations. As these *testimonios* show, language has historically been used in the colonization of Latin@s and indigenous peoples of the Americas. The trauma of losing both of her native languages—Spanish and Michelle's family indigenous language (i.e., Luiseno)—at a young age resurfaced in Michelle's adolescence and early adulthood as she began to examine the intersecting points of her ethnic identity and to reflect on

how her multilingual identity and biculturalism were, in fact, assets to her education. Michelle had internalized feelings of shame for speaking Spanish, and as an adult learner she recognized the connection between historical efforts of Americanization and the fear of language communities. These conflicting educational experiences served to isolate Michelle from drawing on cultural strengths.

Rosa, a high-school counselor who was raised in a rural Oregon community, shared a story about how language isolated her family and excluded them from educational experiences:

So, he [her father] noticed ... I don't know specifically what he noticed, but he felt like people were looking at us ... when we spoke Spanish, so he actually stopped teaching us words at a pretty early age before ... I entered elementary school. ... He didn't come to many school activities. He didn't go to school conferences. Well, for that matter, my mom didn't, either. My mom, everything about school makes her uncomfortable. She never enjoyed school. But my dad, he just ... he worked away from the house a lot, but I think also he avoided some of those activities because he didn't want us to be seen as different.

For Rosa's father, speaking Spanish in their rural Oregon community symbolized an identity and culture that was generally undesirable. Languages other than English were viewed as problems rather than as resources. To protect his family from discrimination, Rosa's father did not attend her school or social activities, and she was encouraged to identify with her mother's Anglo heritage and to only use English.

Likewise, Norma, an ELL teacher from a mixed-ethnic family, was also discouraged from using Spanish. She explained, "It was a stigma. It was hard living in a neighborhood where the majority were Spanish speaking. It was a way to sort of lift yourself up and out."

In contrast, Sonia, Rezi, and Lola were not exposed to English until they entered school. Their parents only spoke Spanish at home. Sonia, a semi-retired elementary school teacher, reported that "that was a time when you only spoke English in school. And then, you went home and you only spoke Spanish." She recalls:

I didn't learn Spanish as well. I was really shy. And you see the way I learned was by writing things a thousand times. Everything was kinesthetic, but the problem with this was that I didn't always retain it. I mean, you learn to take the test, you learn to study for the test, but retention wasn't there, you know, one hundred percent.

Rezi, an early learning educator, had a similar experience, in that she felt she had a much harder time in school than her Anglo peers. She shares that "I felt like I had more problems with getting through a lot of the education that I was trying to get through than I saw my friends having." However, Rezi did not regret coming from a bilingual background, affirming that "I am glad now, looking back, because I still am fluent in Spanish and English."

Like Rezi, Lola described her bilingual abilities as an asset to her family, occasionally acting as a translator for her father, who only spoke Spanish. However, she reported having to spend a lot of time in "speech class in fourth and fifth grade."

Miriam also struggled as an adult English learner. A Spanish language teacher and the owner of a Spanish language school for school-age children, Miriam immigrated to Oregon after completing two years of college in Mexico. After working for her uncle for four years, she

enrolled in ESL classes and college courses at the local community college, completing an associate's degree in three years and transferring to a four-year college in Oregon. She tells a story of a professor at her four-year university who questioned her ability to understand the English-centric exams, excluding her from equitable opportunity:

[The professor said] "Well, you're here, you must be able to understand, you know. For me to see that you don't understand ... English as well as you say you do, I have to have these steps done where they [tell] me you need some extra help, so it [is not] just me saying that you don't know what this means or [that I] tricked you ... with a question."

[She goes on to explain] Because they can trick you pretty easily ... when you don't speak the language. I may know the answer, but the way [the question was written] it's like, "Oh my God, I know this answer, but he's confusing me here with this..." with the way they ask you.

However, paradoxically, when Mirriam was enrolled in Spanish language courses, she was held to higher expectations than non-native Spanish speakers. She explains, "They were two or three times [harder] with you because you spoke the language. ... It's like, 'You should be perfect. You should be perfect.'"

As Mirriam indicated, both English and Spanish posed difficulties for her. As an emerging English learner, Mirriam was treated differently than her peers.

Hostile reactions to their Latina identity. As was the cases with other participants—Sonia, Michelle, Norma, and Rezi—Mirriam's interactions with instructors regarding language ability and use could be viewed as hostile reactions by institutional agents based on negative perceptions of Latin@s. Merriam explained, "The professors, some were great, some were

indifferent. ... One of them was like, 'OK, Hispanics, you are not very smart.' You have a lot that, their expectations of Hispanic culture, obviously, is low."

The women in this study all reported that these hostile reactions to their Latina identity made an impact on their educational trajectories and ethnic identity development.

Sonia shared an experience of a hostile reaction that took place during her student-teaching assignment as a pre-service elementary school teacher. Her supervising teacher, who was Anglo, failed to recognize Sonia's bilingual abilities as an asset or recognize her impressive college credentials: instead, she problematized Sonia's language background and framed Sonia's evaluation solely on the degree of her Spanish accent when she spoke English:

One time, she said, "You will never get a job because of your accent." Just to say that I cried, you know, it was beyond devastation, beyond. I had been working my tail off. I had to... I was forced to get another loan ... to finish off my senior year.

Rosa, like Sonia, encountered hostile responses that impacted her educational experiences:

When I was in elementary school, one of my friends from Blue Birds [after school enrichment program for girls] came over after school and had dinner with us ... the next day, kids at school were calling me a barbarian because we ate with our hands. So, that night, we'd had tortillas and a typical meal that mom would make... and we were eating tortillas and so we were eating with our hands. ... I [also] remember in history about the Crusades and the Catholic Church kind of trying to run the government and those types of things and feeling like I stood out because I was Catholic.

Like Rosa, Rezi shared a story about hostile reactions that made her question her identity:

[Kids' moms would say things like] "Well, you can't play with her because she's Mexican and her skin is brown." And so, my friends or the kids that would come over to play were like, "Oh, yeah, your skin is brown. So, my mom said your skin is brown. And I can't play with you anymore." Things like that, I don't know if it's ... you know, you continue to hear those kinds of things as you're growing up and you think, "Well, what's wrong with me? Why am I different?"

Rezi goes on to speak about the impact of academic tracking:

In junior high school, that's when they do a lot of testing. Now, for some reason, I was pretty awful with the tests ... I was a bit discouraged and felt like I was a failure. I didn't feel like I was very intelligent, that I couldn't really get very far because I wasn't able to do well on these tests. Whatever they call the tests, they were the kind that put you in different groups depending on your level. ... That test was really important to see where you were at. ... I didn't do well on the test, so I feel like that didn't encourage me. It made me feel not very confident, I guess. ... It wasn't until then [later in college] that I accepted who I was. It took that long for me to get to that point of going, "OK, yes, I'm different than all these people, but I'm the same as these people, and these people are OK." I got to [grade] level, but, meanwhile, you've gone through your whole ... all the years of education and development and of feeling like not quite ... I don't know if it's good enough or not, just ... feeling like something is different about you.

Likewise, Norma, an ELL teacher, shares:

I remember being in Social Studies class and we had to make a map of Italy and I brought in my map and the teacher showed my map to the whole class and looked at me and she said, "You are a silver dollar among pennies." And that didn't help my situation because I felt ... I felt ... my friends wouldn't talk to me, and that type of thing.

Norma's teacher, knowingly or unknowingly, marginalized Norma's academic work by comparing her efforts to the academic failures of her peers, who primarily identified as African American or Latin@. Norma felt that, by making such comments, her teacher insulted all of Norma's peers and isolated her from her friends. Such remarks are examples of *racial microaggressions*: subtle, racially motivated disparaging comments for which the speaker usually has plausible deniability (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012).

Lola, an elementary school teacher working in a rural school, also shared an experience of feeling isolated by the hostile remarks of a teacher. Lola was born in a rural Oregon community and attended school in the same district from Kindergarten through high school. Her mother, a first-generation Mexican American, grew up in Southern California, and Lola's father was born in Mexico. Lola's mother worked as an educational assistant in Lola's elementary school, and continued to work in the district during the entire time that Lola attended school. Lola's father was disabled following a work-related accident at the local lumber mill. Lola remembers that "there was always a big concern about him not getting stuff outside because they always felt people were looking to see if he really was disabled or whatever, spying on him or whatever." Similar to her father's experience of isolation, Lola recalled enjoying her band class in fifth grade, but remembers feeling targeted and subjected to hostile reactions from her middle-school band teacher:

I was [the only Latin@] in band and the band teacher didn't seem to like me and I don't know why. I don't know, just one of those teachers that you could really tell who he liked and who he didn't like. I just felt like he always picked on me as far as ... mostly like, "Did you practice?" You know, that kind of thing.

Though her best friend was also in the band class, Lola quit in middle school, prompted by the band teacher's practice of singling her out and questioning her skill and commitment. This contributed to Lola's feelings of isolation and inferiority with regard to her peers.

Several of the women in this study described hostile experiences in their religious instruction. Rezi reported:

I didn't really get a positive feeling ... the nuns were very strict and they also wanted you to know things and a lot of things I didn't know. And so, they would come and smack your hands when you didn't have the right answer. And so, I started to feel very pressured being there and I didn't like going after a while."

Michelle recalled:

Fourth grade was the one year that I felt that there definitely was a favoring towards the Filipino people. I remember [wondering] why was she [her teacher] like that? I remember wanting to do good and ... when I wrote her a written piece, [it was returned with] red all over it. And in retrospect I thought about that many times thinking, why did she not just conference with me? I don't think I got a lot of individualized attention that year.

Sonia described:

I did Holy Communion when I was five years old ... it was in Mexico. ... I was really upset because they would not let me receive communion [in her California Catholic elementary school] because I had not gone through their program in English.

Hostile acts made an impact on the educational experiences of all of the participants. However, these women also noted positive forces that shaped their educational experiences.

Allies: Mothers, mentors, messengers, and “me.” All of the participants in this study spoke of allies as sources of capital who impacted their educational experiences; they most often named mothers, mentors, and friends (i.e., messengers). A few of the women reported themselves (i.e., me) as being their greatest allies in self-determination.

Mothers. Lola recalled the close and trusting relationship she had with her mother and how her mother supported her learning:

My mom is very smart. I always knew that growing up, that I could ask for anything and she knew, you know ... I just remember just always talking, always, you know, she always would explain things and talk about things like things going on in the world ... but we always had books and she always read the paper. She was always into learning more.

Likewise, Mirriam spoke of the strong presence and dedication of her mother:

My mom knew all the professors or the teachers. If I tried to skip class—which I did one time—she would know about it because everybody knew my mother. ... I mean my mom always ... like, [there] wasn't a high school or middle school in the neighborhood ...

because it was a developing neighborhood, so [my mom] and lots of the other mothers went to the government and arranged everything, so we could have a middle school close to the house and a high school. So my mom was on top of everything.

Norma also recalled how her mother had an important impact on her educational experiences:

I knew how to read when I was, I think, three or four because my mom was a teacher. And so, ... I remember, just her spending a lot of time with me as I was going through my early educational experiences, making sure I had my homework done, making sure that the report card looked good, making sure that I wasn't a behavior problem.

She goes on to explain how her mother played a part in her learning experiences:

My mother ... would take what the teachers had given me and extend it. So, after I mentioned something about learning about a topic, she would say, "Let's go to the library and find out more," or "Let's get more information about that." ... She really knew how important it was to really get the full story, and she gave me the idea that there are other perspectives about history. [Norma continues, explaining her mother's role in sharing cultural knowledge.] My school experiences weren't the experiences that are really ingrained in me. It was more what I did outside of school: going to celebrations, visiting with my mother's family, eating the food, going to the parties, having the piñatas.

Here, Norma gives a vivid example of how Latin@ cultural characteristics position families as responsible for providing their children with an ethical and moral education, and emphasize the importance of contributing to one's community. The majority of the women in this study reported that their mothers contributed to their educational experiences by teaching

lessons from their homes. These lessons were informed by cultural knowledge and language, and provided experiential learning opportunities that may not have been recognized by school officials as parental involvement. These examples from participants' *testimonios* illustrate a counter-narrative, whereby these women drew on family strengths to resist being marginalized by standard parental involvement practices and expectations.

Mentors. In addition to mothers, the majority of the women spoke of teachers, counselors, and employers who acted as mentors. These mentors offered advice, encouragement, and opportunities that affected participants' educational journeys. For some of the women, these institutional agents were their only allies. Maya, an ELL teacher working in an Oregon rural school, shared that she had many mentors among her school instructors, church teachers, and school counselors, all of whom made a great impact on her educational experiences. Maya grew up in a rural Oregon community where both of her parents worked in the timber industry. Coming from a mixed-ethnic family, she never felt that she fit in at school and had little academic support from her parents. She explains:

I had a teacher ... in elementary school who wanted to help me because, like, math, it's always been hard for me. She wanted to help me with math and she was willing to stay after school and help me and then bring me home afterwards and just make it so that, no matter what, I would be able to get that help. But my father eventually said no, that I couldn't stay and I couldn't get that help, and so, that ended pretty quickly. But that is always at the top of my mind, that she [Maya's teacher] was willing to do whatever it took to make sure I got help even though it didn't work out.

Maya explained that her father was a “very controlling man [and her] home life was very chaotic.” After her parents separated and she became a teen parent, Maya relied on the academic and counseling support she received through her school. She recalls:

The school was very supportive of me staying in school. There was a special van for the teen moms, that came and picked us [Maya and her son] up to take us to school and there was a daycare center [at Maya's school]. I was able to do a lot of things [because] they were really wanting to support me and keep me in school. It was always kind of a welcoming place.

Later, after she and her then-boyfriend (who later became her husband) moved out of Oregon and started living on their own, Maya received support from a foster parent who took in her family of three. She remembers:

She took us in and she kept my son throughout the day and she sent me off to school every day and just kind of make sure that things were taken care of. ... She definitely was a mentor, too, just to keep working hard and get through it, and so, I could do whatever I wanted to do with life. ... I had a really good counselor as well. I know that they believed in me, so then I had to just, I had to do it because otherwise, I don't know, there was just no other choice than not doing it. I just had to do it. I think there's still so much support behind me that there was no other path for me to take besides trying to at least work hard and become something for my family.

Maya's described how the high expectations and academic encouragement of mentors positively impacted her educational experiences. Unlike the daily support many upper- and

middle-class Anglo, English-speaking students may experience, Maya relied on the support of mentors to counteract the negative influences of a highly dysfunctional home life that left her with few resources for academic success.

Michelle, like Maya, reported the positive impacts of mentors:

Mrs. Ryan was one of my mentors ... because she definitely just made me feel like I could do anything. She made me feel like there was a possibility for anything and everything ... It wasn't until fifth grade that I first got that taste of what it would feel like to have a lot of support behind me. She was really sweet. ... I can tell that she was tender with me, like there was like *cariño*. There was, like, an affection there as she would have with a daughter.

Michelle continues, sharing another experience she had with a teacher mentor:

And in junior high, I just felt so proud. He [her teacher] just always seemed like he thought highly of me, that I could outperform myself. And so he always made sure just to say, "You got a good head on your shoulders."

Lola also felt encouraged by a teacher mentor, recalling, "It was one of the teachers telling me that I could do it and then me saying, 'Yeah, I want to be in pre-calculus.'"

Similar to Lola, Norma shares how a mentor teacher made an impact on her educational experiences. She recalled:

My third-grade teacher was very kind. ... She really gave unconditional love to all of her students and I think that sort of matched the cultural characteristics of what I experienced

at home with my mother and my mother's family, that unconditional love that I'd seen among Mexican families.

Norma goes on, speaking about the impact of her teachers high expectations and their encouragement of Norma's participation in extracurricular activities:

There was a speech and debate coach who, like that third grade teacher, really encouraged all of us. ... [She had] high expectations. ... We went to state finals. I earned trophies. And so, the speech and debate team together with the exchange program really changed my future. So, yeah, so I have those teachers to thank to for that.

Similar to Norma, Sonia recalls how a teacher mentor's high expectations helped her move to a higher academic level:

And so, when I was taking a history class in my first year in junior high school, Mr. Morlina, he was a teacher who made a difference. ... He looked at me and he said, "What are you doing in here?" He said, "You don't belong here. You should not be in this track." That was my first Hispanic teacher. ... I don't know what he did, but he talked to people in the office ... [and] they moved me. I was not in the low track anymore. And he saw something in me. ... I went through middle school. I did well. I did quite well. But I worked my tail off. Nothing has ever come easy to me.

The majority of the women reported that a particular teacher had acted as a mentor and had made a positive impact on their educational experiences. In addition, four of the women

stressed the help they'd received from high school counselors. This included directing them to college scholarships and helping them with the college-application process. Lola recalled:

I did apply for ... a minority student scholarship, and ... it was my counselor who brought that to my attention and I could get a scholarship ... because I was a Mexican and it was the first year of the scholarship.

Rosa shared:

I researched and I talked to my counselor and I found out, you know, that I needed to get letters of recommendation. ... I did those things with the help of my teachers themselves, but I never discussed this with my parents.

Similar to Lola and Rosa, Maya received the support of her school counselor:

He was really good ... with helping me like with scholarships. You know, like "Here's the scholarship, apply for this one. Here's the scholarship, apply for this one." And there was one scholarship that they never had anybody to apply for it because it was for a minority student. I [applied] and, sure enough, I was able to get that scholarship and that was \$4,000 a year, each year.

Messengers. Study participants spoke of the power and privilege that their friends and their friends' families were afforded by coming from college-educated backgrounds. The participants reported that their friends provided important sources of information regarding college preparation: encouraging them to enroll in college preparatory courses, helping them to register for college entrance exams, and discussing college selection with them. Michelle, an elementary school teacher working in a dual-language immersion classroom, explains:

My mom didn't have those experiences and I just don't think that it was something that ... I don't know ... it was a different dynamic where my mom would ask me and I would tell her, but it wasn't like there was, "Let me walk with you." It was more ... I was a very independent person, and my mom was a very independent person, too, so we were just kind of like "Okay, you do your thing and I'll do my thing."

The majority of Michelle's friends were high achieving Anglo students whose parents provided college-going support and who expected that their children would attend college.

Michelle explains:

My friend, who was the class president, she had a mother who was very communicative and just a very receptive person. ... I think my mom just always told me "When you go to college—when you go to college—," but it wasn't like there was a follow up, like, "Let's look into this together."

Although Michelle's mother held high aspirations for Michelle, assuming that she would attend college, her mother lacked the knowledge and resources to offer anything more than general encouragement.

Sonia, who grew-up in Southern California, also shared how her friends made an impact on her college-going educational experiences:

My friends, ... the majority of them were Asian. And guess what? They're going to college whether they wanted or not because their parents made it very clear to them. ... I wasn't even thinking of going to college yet. But I mean, my friends were smart. I hung around the right kids ... their families were more tight. I mean, they really valued

education. My parents never pushed education and I don't think they could have done that because they didn't know.

Like Sonia, Rosa shared a similar experience, although she attended a rural Oregon school with primarily white students. Rosa explained how her friends influenced her college-going process and why she began thinking about going to college. She recalled:

All of my friends were applying to colleges. ... I'd always taken the same classes that they had taken. So you know, we took the SAT because they said it was time to sign up for the SAT. So thank goodness, I was with a good group of friends.

Rezi, who graduated from a multicultural high-school in California, also reported how her friends influenced her college plans by sharing information about career planning:

Once you get through high school, it's like, "Well, what are you going to do?" "Well, go to college, of course." And I'm like, "Oh, Ok. Well, I guess I'm going to college." I didn't know how. ... My closest girl friends were all going to college. I thought, "OK, well, my parents didn't talk to me about it." Nobody else. My older sister had gone into the Navy, and my two older brothers that were in Vietnam, they didn't go to college. So, I was going to be the first one and I said, "Well, that's what everybody is doing, so I'm going to college somehow." I think a lot of them seemed to have support from family: I remember them saying things like, "Well, my mom really wants me to get into this program." Or, "My dad wants me to be an attorney. So, I'm going to go to ..."

The majority of the participants indicated that having friends who were exposed to a college-going culture made an impact on their educational experiences. In addition, the majority of the women emphasized a persistent educational inequity: first-generation students, and, in particular Latin@ students, lacked knowledge about the college-going process and relied heavily on social networks (i.e., social capital) outside of their family to access college-related information.

Me. A few of the participants reported relying on themselves more than on family, friends, or other mentors when it came to educational experiences related to the college-going process. Although Mirriam, who was raised in a large family outside of Mexico City, shared how her mother was a strong mentor throughout her time as a primary- and secondary- school student, college decision-making was an independent process. She explains:

I mean just by looking around, I just wanted [something] better. I wanted something better for myself. I wasn't going to just stay there and be a housewife and get kids and not do anything. I remember when I moved to Monterrey, I was the black sheep of the house and I went. ... I started working. My father didn't talk to me for over a year because, you know, first he paid for my high school and obviously he wanted to keep paying for me but I just wanted something even better: that's when I moved away from Mexico City and I went to Monterrey and started working myself and paid [for] my university.

She goes on to describe how her self-reliance was not enough to gain the information she needed to successfully navigate transferring to a US four-year college. She explains, "I didn't

have a clue about GPAs, numbers, or anything like that at all. So, it's just something that pulls you back."

With an experience similar to Mirriam's even though Sonia received educational support from school mentors and college-bound friends, her parents were not supportive of her decision to attend college. She recalled speaking with her parents about attending college:

[I said], "I'm going to ... try to go to this college." And they said, "What?!" They were not happy campers, you know that. They were not happy with me. [Things like] "How can you go so far?" and "What are you doing?" you know.

Rezi explained that she was motivated to attend college because all of her friends had college aspirations. However, without family or school guidance, she shared that "I think it was mostly just with myself" that she followed through and learned about the college-going process. She did not have family or school guidance.

The women's *testimonio* responses describe how their educational experiences were impacted by their socioeconomic status, language and culture, hostile reactions to their Latina identity, and positive interactions with allies. For all of the women, resistance capital made a great impact on their educational journey. For a few of the women, self-reliance was described as the most important factor in accessing a college education. These experiences emerged at the social, institutional, and personal levels throughout their educational trajectory.

Finding 2: Entering and Persisting as Teachers

When asked how they made their decisions to enter and persist in the teaching profession, all nine women reported that they entered and persisted as teachers for personal transformation; to work towards ending educational and systematic injustices; and to give back to and serve

communities. They perceived teaching as a position of power that would provide them the agency to challenge and transform oppressive educational policies and practices, as well as to promote the social and economic advancement of others, particularly Latin@ students. Their decision to enter teaching was made deliberately, with the intention of using their career to make a difference for themselves and their community. They perceived their persistence in the teaching profession as a reflection of their unconditional commitment to serve their communities.

Personal transformation. Michelle, like the other participants, was inspired by the transformative potential of education. She was motivated to teach because she felt empowered by her higher education experiences, where she was exposed to critical pedagogy (i.e. education that promotes critical thinking, liberation, and a just society). She felt that she would continue to learn through a teaching career, and would be a good role model as an educated Latina. Michelle explains:

I really love learning. I love learning. I like information. When I [attended] community college, it just started clicking for me. Like, I have the power; I have the power to be their leader, the director in my life. And I didn't have that, beyond that place in my life. So I think that is what has helped me forward, is that I wanted to learn more.

The possibility to make change. The following examples from the women's *testimonios* illustrate their motivations to enter the teaching profession, with a desire to make structural and systematic changes for the better.

Lola, for instance, was inspired to become an elementary school teacher because she had observed the power her teachers held and the opportunities they were afforded through their

social networks. She recalls, "I always wanted to ... change things for the better ... and I ... wanted to make a difference ... and [help] the next generation."

Give back. The participants' responses indicate they chose teaching as a way to give back to their communities and improve educational experiences and outcomes for all students. Sonia, like others, shared the potential she saw in teaching: "I will work with them [my students] [beyond what may be expected] because education is the way out of poverty." Like Sonia, Maya, an ELL teacher working in a rural Oregon school, found a pathway through the challenges in her educational journey; this success inspired her to give back:

I want to be helpful and I want to be helpful to people or kids who really need it and that has made the most emphasis [for me] to go into teaching. [I wanted to go] to a place that needs [help]... where no one else really wants to go, where people don't stay ... because those are the places that ... need good teachers who will be willing to stay and stick it out with them and get them through and ... encourage the students.

She continues, discussing her student-teaching experience:

I wanted to work with a population where I ... would be needed the most. I student taught in a [rural] town that ... had a [large percentage] of ESL students. That's where ... I used a lot of my Spanish. They were just putting [Latin@s] in the back of the class and they'd sit for the whole hour and there were a lot of newcomers. They would not have any translation of anything. I think it was ... the lack of curriculum or programs or help for the population.

Maya was inspired to become a teacher to help others progress, particularly English Learners who were marginalized in rural schools. These examples illustrates how the

participants' interest in teaching was fueled by their experiences of social oppression, and offered a way to give back and to improve students' opportunities for success.

Unconditional commitment to serve. The professional trajectories for the women in this study were varied; however, all participants reported that they had persisted as educators because of their passion to serve their communities. Examples from the women's *testimonios* illustrate that their commitment to serve was influenced by their religious and cultural backgrounds, as well as by their commitment to equity.

For instance, Norma, an ELL teacher, described her religious and cultural background as the origin of her willingness to serve and persist as a teacher. Norma explains:

I was raised Catholic [and taught by my mother that] you've got to give back to your community. And I saw her model that. I saw her collecting clothes for poor families. ... As poor as we were, we weren't as poor as others, and ... she would take [our clothes] to her students, to other families. So, I saw her model that and it was ... sort of a given that that's what you do. ... It was all unconditional.

Likewise, Rosa describes how working with school children and their families from rural communities similar to where she attended school provided her with a career through which she could serve her community and promote educational equity. She explains why she chose to leave her career in health care and persist in a school career:

I was 26, 27 when I decided to go into education. I majored in biochemistry ... and worked for ... four-and-a-half years after college as a phlebotomist. I hated telling ... especially Medicare patients that "We can't do this blood test for you unless you pay us up [front] because your insurance doesn't cover it." I did not want to go into that kind of

a system. And so, my health teacher from high school said, “You need to think about what was it that you wanted to do for people [in a medical profession] and how can you do that in a different way if you don’t want to go to med school.”

Persistence. All of the women in this study worked hard to overcome challenges to becoming teachers. They were willing to work hard to keep their scholarships; gain additional training or endorsements (i.e., teaching credentials specific to an academic subject); pay for and take state-specific high-stakes skills tests; learn additional languages; and balance school, career, and family to persist as teachers. The participants described the desire to make a difference in the lives of their students and their personal resiliency as influencing their persistence as teachers. Glemer, a high-school Spanish teacher, explained how the urgent desire to make a difference for Latin@ students drove her to persist in the teaching profession, in spite of its tremendous challenges:

“I don’t want to do this.” That was my first thought, but my heart came up and I was looking at the needs, the kids came for me for help, for guidance, for support, for everything. They were having lunch in my classes. They were after school all the time. I signed on to be a mentor for at least 10 kids, and my heart started crying. I was like, “Oh, my God, what to do?”

She goes on speaking about her decision to continue teaching:

We need to be professionals: if you’re really a teacher and you really care and you want to serve. If your passion is not enough sometimes, compassion is more. So when you combine those two, then you’re a professional; I will say you’re doing your job, but still, it’s [not a] guarantee that you will [not] face more challenges—you will—but you need to

do something before it's too late, before your time is done, and you're retiring and "Oh, I missed this beautiful experience to do this differently."

Sonia describes how her personal resiliency contributed to her persistence as an elementary school teacher:

I had [a student] and he wasn't progressing with reading and so forth. His aunt came to talk to me, and I didn't realize that she was a reading specialist and she taught college classes. ... She said to me ... "You don't know what you're doing with him." She ... went on and on ... that I should be trying this or doing this or that and ... I was baffled, [it was] either my first year or my second year teaching. I went home and cried and cried and cried and I thought, "I guess I'm not good enough." And then I kept thinking of all the jobs I had in college and how hard I worked to get where I am. After I got tired of crying and feeling sorry for myself, I called his aunt and I said, "Where do you teach? Because I want to take a class ..." So, I went and took the class. I had to ... pull-up my bootstraps and swallow my pride and say, "I don't know how to take care of his needs." And then later on, I ... got a reading endorsement.

Conversely, Rezi who taught in public and private early-learning programs and who contributed to statewide early-learning initiatives, left her teaching role after 20 years to work privately as a nanny. She explains:

Head Start has never paid its teachers very well and that's one of the main reasons that I didn't stick with Head Start for very long, because I always made more money [working as a nanny], which ... I hate to say this, [but that's] what it comes down to a lot of times;

you have to be able to make a living and take care of yourselves and everything. ... I made more [money] watching a baby in somebody's private home than I would working for Head Start, being responsible for 15 children.

Finding 3: Roles as Latina Teachers

As they identified their perceptions of why they entered and persisted in the teaching profession, the women also described the valuable roles they play in schools and classrooms in creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces. Examples from the women's *testimonios* illustrate the value they add as culturally and linguistically responsive teachers by welcoming emerging bilingual language development, speaking Spanish, redressing negative perceptions of Latin@s, acting as mentors for Latin@ students, holding high expectations for Latin@ students and families, establishing caring and trusting relationships with students and families, and using culturally responsive teaching practices and culturally relevant pedagogy that contribute to enhanced educational experiences and academic success of each student, particularly, Latin@ students.

Creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces. By locating and reflecting on the power relations in her classroom as they relate to students' home languages, Michelle describes her role as a bilingual teacher in creating equitable learning spaces for all of her students by honoring the formal use of Spanish and encouraging hybrid interactions of Spanish and English among her emerging bilingual students and their families, creating a welcoming classroom environment:

The Spanish speaker is... coming from a disempowered place [in US majority-culture schools], normally a linguistic capital that is disempowered ... Instead of coming in with the disempowerment barriers, [students in her classroom are] empowered with their own

language, because it is honored as opposed to not being honored. Especially in [her city], I think that it shows ... that Spanish is a beautiful language, that their [Latin@] culture is a wonderful culture, and shows that their parents are smart. [Because] I think that's one perception that students take on, is thinking that, "Oh, my parents are not as smart as that English- speaking parent, because they don't speak English." And the student ends up being an interpreter for the greater community exchanges. But in this case, I think it's honored. So the English-only parent or English-only student ... comes [to school with a] capacity to have an understanding, a compassion, a drive to know the other languages, other cultures at their school. So they're given a bridge to create some enduring friendships.

She continues speaking of the impact on her students' families:

A lot of [English-speaking] parents have put in the effort to make sure that they take the opportunity to get to know the [Latin@] parents. And there are some really wonderful parents that speak English at home that try to bridge that connection, whereas that's really unheard of in an English-only classroom.

Michelle's example illustrates how welcoming emerging bilingual language development sends strong messages to students of color that their culture is valued and respected in school, encouraging the growth of positive ethnic identities and creating an equitable and inclusive classroom.

Likewise, Rezi describes her role as a bilingual teacher in disrupting the inequity in learning spaces:

It's pretty clear that there aren't enough teachers that are trained for working with children with English as a second language. And, because [general classroom teachers] have their hands full, ... a kindergarten teacher with 30 kids or something ... might have three or four children in that class that speak only Spanish. Well, it's kind of like, do or die. It's like, "OK, well, you know, this is what we're doing." ... And so, occasionally, they will get somebody like myself and pay me to go in and shadow two or three kids and ... it's sad to me because I think, well, "What would be happening right now if I wasn't here?" the [Spanish-speaking students] would be ... "Well, I don't know what she wants, the teacher wants me to do. I don't really understand what's she's saying. So, I'm just going to go over here and ... play with these children for a while and maybe they'll get to me or maybe they won't; I don't know, but at least I have something to do right now." And so, I see that there's still a big gap and I see that a lot of children are ... they're making it through, but they could be making it a lot better if they had more, ... were able to pay for somebody like myself to come in maybe more hours or in more classes or something like that.

As a bi-lingual instructor, Rezi highlights that using her cultural expertise and bilingual skills to mentor and facilitate student learning, provides some moments of equity for students:

Eventually, they would accept anybody [teacher or mentor] because they would see this person as somebody that they could trust, but it's really ... but it takes a lot longer and it's a lot harder to build that trust if you can't really communicate well, [when] one is speaking Spanish and the other is speaking English. It's like, how do you build on that unless you have an interpreter come in, and then once you have another person coming

in, they have to first build trust with that person and it takes a lot longer, and sometimes it breaks down before it gets going. ... It seems like I always had a good rapport. They trust me. I don't know if it's just the fact that I could understand easily and I could relate my family stories to them so that they were able to trust me.

The examples from Rezi's *testimonio* illustrate how using students' own language encourages student engagement and creates an equitable learning environment.

The overwhelming majority of the women in this study were racialized, stigmatized, and marginalized when speaking Spanish in their early learning experiences. They described oppressive English-only policies that excluded and isolated them from schools, and even marginalized them as pre-service teachers. However in their teaching practices, they often found their bilingual skills in high demand—frequently exploited, but rarely valued. Nonetheless, examples from their *testimonios* show that they used their bilingual skills to create equitable learning spaces for their students.

Acting as a translator was one way that Lola promoted equity as an elementary school teacher:

The families that I've had to interpret for when I first met them ... would later seek me out to help them communicate with their child's teacher. ... They told people that I was the one to come to if they needed [help] because in [her school district], there was usually just one person for the whole district that would be the official translator or interpreter who was very difficult to get in touch with, and when everything is not something that you can set up— You know, sometimes there are immediate needs that need to be addressed.

She goes on to describe her experiences as an interpreter:

I remember being very upset about it because, to me, it was all extra, you know, people get paid to interpret these conferences. And to me, I was doing two conferences because I had to ... [prepare] it in English and I had to ... figure out what to say in Spanish. And so I felt like it was a lot more work for me to do these conferences in Spanish. Not that it got me anywhere by being mad about it but ... there were so many official words that I didn't know in Spanish. I didn't know how to say these things in Spanish. It's not part of my normal vocabulary. And so then I was really intimidated having to do it, but after going through a couple [conferences] ... with an interpreter, I'd pick up on how to say certain things and that's when I was more comfortable than upset that I'd have to do it. And I don't remember if it was that no one got interpreters or they did and I didn't but then I just started requested them whenever it was time to schedule conferences and they gave me a bad time about it but they still set them up for me. Sometimes, they weren't very good interpreters. ... I'd tell them something and they'd say whatever to the parents and I'd be sitting there going "No, that's not what I meant" or "That's not what I said." And I usually felt pretty comfortable just saying it in Spanish and then the interpreter would look at me like "Oh, you do speak Spanish." Sometimes, there are good ones and they do exactly what you [ask]...but it's ... interesting because my friends would ask me or I would say "This is a good one" ... and they were always ... curious to know if the interpreter was saying what they were saying and interested to hear the times when I said "No, that was not what they were saying."

She continues speaking of the need for bilingual teachers and how this impacts on equity:

I think it [bilingual teachers] would be very important. As the Latino community increases, they [school decision-makers] may start realizing the support that should be

there or can be there. It would be overwhelming to just ask people [teachers who speak Spanish] to help them. I think that there are more people that are able to communicate [in Spanish] and willing to communicate and help families [who speak Spanish], and these people see a difference with the parent involvement, and once [Latin@ families] feel supported and feel like they have a place, it's ... a positive direction.

Maya, who taught English learners in a school district that was 70% minority students, had a similar experience of being relied on for her bilingual skills:

Having the language helps a lot and I'm able to communicate with families much easier. I have a teaching partner here half time with me, and she doesn't speak Spanish. She knows some things and she says she can do a little bit, but if there's ever a phone call that comes through and my assistant is not in the office at that time, then it comes through to me. If the principal needs me to call someone and my assistant is not around, then I am asked to make the phone call. So, there's more of a responsibility of being in contact with families and parents, but that's also nice because then the kids know that you can make that contact and the parents know that they can have that contact, as well.

Norma, like Maya, spoke of ways she encouraged an equitable learning space free from bias or favoritism by inviting Latin@ families into her classroom. Norma shared, "I've had families come in and teach how to make the piñata and share the games that they learned as children, and that, it makes a huge difference." This example shows how Latina teachers can provide space for cultural links between home and school.

As well as creating spaces for equitable learning, examples from the women's *testimonios* show how they protect and support Latin@ students by disrupting negative discourses prevalent in their schools. The participants' own experiences of living in a racist, ethnocentric society gave them insights into the lives of their students and provided a context for their advocacy.

Below, Michelle, Maya, and Rosa describe examples of negative discourses that they encountered. In the upcoming section on inclusion, this researcher shows how these participants took action to redress stereotypes and to let Latin@ students know that their contributions and perceptions were as valued and respected as those of their Anglo Peers.

Michelle describes her experiences with low expectations towards Latin@s:

The teachers are like, "Oh, Latino, you know, you know them." There are definitely some stereotypes and some [discriminating] perceptions that exist within the teachers who teach our students. I think they're from the [dominant] culture that doesn't really value diversity and doesn't value those unique qualities of language. ... to hear these stories, hear from people who say, "Yeah, they [Latin@s] can't do this." And then my reaction is like "What?"

Maya recalls her experiences with language discrimination:

They say, "We always must speak English" or that kind of philosophy. "You're here; you need to speak English." ... Maybe they've had some type of experience in their lives or, a lot of times, when people hear someone speaking a different language, they automatically assume it's bad and that they must be saying something bad about them.

Rosa describes her experiences with phenotype (i.e., outward appearance) marginalization:

The mindset of the majority, it's like, they don't even realize all of the privileges that are just granted to them based on what they look like, and it's interesting for me because I come from a minority background, but I look like the majority. You know, how many comments I hear that people don't mean. I don't think necessarily to be racist or rude, but I don't think they would say it in front of me if I had darker skin.

Norma explained how taking action against these negative discourses was sometimes difficult:

Well, people are afraid to lose their jobs, frankly. [Sometimes] I have chosen to not speak out because of fear of losing a job. ... Because there are so many teachers who have been laid off over the last few years that, if you have a job, you're considered to be one of the lucky ones. And ... if you're one of the lucky ones, it means you know how to play the game and you're not trying to rock the boat too much. For example, I hear comments sometimes from staff, not particularly teachers, but just other staff, such things like, "Oh, the Mexican families, are [they] going to pick up their child on time?" I mean, just subtle comments about the performance of the Latino families or what you can expect from them, how they might perform in school.

She goes on to explain how her role of creating equitable learning spaces in her classroom is an act of resistance to negative discourses:

Nobody wants to be put in the role of having to explain. It's not really their job to explain to others why they should do this or that or ... but because I've taken an interest in equality in education, I think that ... I have a personal interest in making sure that [equity] happens.

Encouraging inclusion. All of the participants described examples of intentionally trying to create inclusive learning environments that valued the backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities of all students, particularly Latin@ students. As mentioned in the three quotes above, these efforts to encourage inclusion were often intended to disrupt negative discourses that the participants described experiencing at the intersection of points of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, language, religion, and immigration history. Examples from the women's *testimonios* show how assuming this role can be a challenging endeavor.

Maya, for instance, described planning an all-school event to welcome students and families from different backgrounds to the elementary school where she worked:

I created a multicultural festival that we've had for the past three years and I've gotten some different feedback from that [event]. Last year, ... there were [negative] feelings ... from some Anglo parents because it was called a multicultural festival... and a teacher was told [because the event] was put on by me, with the last name [Rodriguez], they jumped to [the conclusion that it was] just a Mexican thing. It's only for Mexican people and it's ... "Well, we're not going to that. Why would we want to go to that and why isn't my culture represented?" And they would send their kids to kind of challenge me and say, "Well, I want to do something for my culture" and I'll be like, "That's fantastic ... " So, this year, ... this teacher and I, ... are really going to work on it because she was, at first, hesitant about changing the name, and then, I'm like, "Well, do you think we need to change the name?" We can change the name so it could be something different. And then, she was like, "No, why should we change the name?" Multicultural is about ... multicultural, it's everybody.

Maya's story illustrates her resistance to pressure from Anglo students and families against creating an inclusive school event that intentionally welcomed families from all backgrounds.

Like Maya, Sonia reported her role in creating an inclusive school environment by building positive relationships with parents—in particular, Latin@ parents. Sonia explains:

I tell them, "Whatever you can do, show up for every conference. Show up for everything. Because if you are not showing up the teachers are going ... to say, 'Well, you know, they don't care. They never come for it.'" You know, teachers are like that.

Sonia's experiences mentoring parents show that equity issues complicate parental involvement practices at the intersection of race, class, culture, language, and immigration status.

Likewise, Glemer challenged school inequities and played a role in creating inclusive high-school classrooms by developing additional courses to serve native Spanish speakers, especially newcomers—to her school, the United States, or the English language. Glemer was approached by other Spanish teachers in her school:

They talked to me and shared with me a concern, and their concern was that they felt that they were not serving the Latinos taking Spanish. I was listening and, "OK ... A possible solution is to offer a class for them, ... Spanish for native speakers." So I gave the program and the proposal to my principal. It was approved, and they opened my first class. And also [I was] teaching Spanish for Native Speakers 1 and 2 for newcomers.

Despite this achievement, Glemer explained the difficulty she faced in expanding inclusive learning spaces for Latin@ students beyond her classroom, through the activities she sponsored:

I realized that what we [the school] have done with the Latino community, we were not successful with the Anglo community teachers. We couldn't break that barrier. Still, we got complaints from kids saying their PE teacher did this [unfair treatment] and said this [demeaning comment] to me. And we invited teachers to events and they're [the Anglos] just one or two and we're [the Latin@s], like, 80. And I was the only [teacher] from the school district, maybe two or three other people; there were Latino families and students but [no Anglo representation] from the staff members. We were not successful, at least, when I left after six years and we couldn't open that window for our Latino community to really feel completely comfortable, to feel that we have this place [school] where we could be together with no problem, but they [Latin@ students] were still, like, a no-no. We didn't see the engagement with the [Anglo students and staff] saying, "Hey, you are doing a lot. We are doing this [encouraging positive relationships between Latin@ and Anglo students]. You are great. Well, how you have changed. We don't have any more fights. ... The kids are so successful. They are doing great in class."

Glemer's experience illustrates how hard Latin@ teachers, students, and families can work to create an inclusive community, and yet still be perceived by the majority culture as refusing to assimilate, or as being uninterested in interacting in majority culture. Glemer goes on to talk about the Latin@ students' success at her current school:

The kids are better now than last year and what makes [them] better this year [is] raising the bar and the way we're selling [it] is [telling the students that] "All of you are good students, you need to be good and you can do it. Let's go and do it. Study hard, so when they [Anglos] see that everybody [Latin@ students] is trying, it will be a big movement like this, they are [engaging] all kids.

Glemer's *testimonio* illustrates the valuable role that she played in creating inclusive school environments by offering relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive enrichment activities, and positive mentoring as counterspaces to the predominately subordinate experiences of Latin@ students in her school.

Several of the participants who held English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsements, had been instructors for district-sponsored Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) trainings that introduced concepts for teaching students for whom English was a second language. Although these trainings were, admittedly, sometimes voluntary, the women in this study described a lack of authentic interest from their teaching peers in learning about working with English learners. Participants reported that administrators or school counselors rarely attended these trainings, and that there was a lack of follow-up cultural competency training or accountability for inclusive teaching practices. Maya explained that in her district, all new teachers are required to take the training, but that there is no follow-up class. "We haven't had any cultural competency trainings or workshops. ... All our trainings are on reading and math or on writing. We're not really focused on how to deal with students with different cultural backgrounds." Glemer discusses the lack of accountability:

There is no tracking like, “Hey, did you take the training? Hey, what have you done?” Who’s watching me if I’m applying that, if I’m doing it and if I’m using it, if I’m helping or if this is giving me good results or not? It isn’t that, it’s just [offered by the district].

Maya and Glemer’s examples regarding SIOP trainings illustrate how working with English learners and developing cultural competency are not promoted as core skills for all teachers. The women in this study made creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces a priority by demonstrating their commitment to engage minority language learners and their families. These valuable roles were important, both in their classrooms and within the larger community.

Finding 4: Recruitment and Retention

All nine women viewed the recruitment of Latinas to the teaching profession as filled with challenges. They believed that their retention would be improved by giving greater value to Latina teachers’ perspectives, cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. The participants reported challenges that impact recruitment, such as poor educational foundations and experiences, lack of Spanish-speaking Latin@ professional role models, and the low perceived value of a teaching career.

Challenges to recruitment. The women in this study overcame multiple social, political, and school-organizational obstacles at various points in their teaching trajectories and reported these experiences as representative of factors that contribute to the difficulty of attracting Latinas to the teaching profession.

Educational foundation and experiences. The majority of the participants reported that poor early learning experiences and limited access to rigorous, relevant pedagogy as challenges

to improving the number of Latina teachers. The participants described these challenges to Latin@ students' academic progress as shrinking the potential pool of future educators. For example, Rezi, who started her undergraduate studies at a community college, reported how oppressive early learning experiences were a challenge to Latina teacher recruitment:

At a certain point, if you're confident ... that you can do this and succeed and be good at what you do. Well, I think ... you wouldn't stop. You would say, "Well, I want to continue. I want to do more. This is a good start, but yet, I would like to get my teaching degree." And I think that you would be more likely to get there if it [school] starts off with that good foundation of feeling like you're a worthwhile person. [However, if] you're struggling with tests ... [like I was], I felt ... self doubt.

Similar to Rezi's experience, Norma worked with English learners where she observed Latin@ students' marginalization in schools as an obstacle that turned away potential Latina teachers:

I had one of my [Latina] students give a presentation to an elementary school class. And she had a great experience and she came back, she said, "Maybe I want to be a teacher." So, setting up opportunities like that for high school students and really targeting [Latinas could make a difference]. It's got to come from the structure or the system, because the problem is that people aren't feeling welcomed into the schools. Families aren't feeling welcomed because schools are looked upon as ... having a certain structure. And anyone who might come in and try to change that structure isn't going to be very hopeful.

Like Norma, Rezi's experiences illustrate how that Latina students' occupational choices can be limited by school structures that deny them opportunities for building their self-confidence and experiencing peer teaching; meanwhile, their Anglo peers may have countless such opportunities, and be totally unaware of this inequity. Missed opportunities such as these reduce the number of Latin@ students potentially interested in a teaching career.

Glemer, a native Spanish speaker, reports an experience similar to Norma's. She explains how the lack of Spanish for newcomers and Spanish for native speakers creates inequitable learning opportunities for Latin@ students:

We don't have a Spanish for native speakers class. If the student scores, say, level four [in Spanish] we don't have a level four to fill his needs; [he is] different from a student in level four because his language is, like, to compare an ELL class level four with an English class, say, for juniors. It's not the same.

Glemer provides an example of how school structures impact the academic achievement gap between Latin@ students and other student peer groups. She points out that, in one area in which native Spanish speakers are more likely to outperform their Anglo peers—the Spanish language—schools don't see a need to offer Spanish language courses. This is a stark contrast with how hard schools work to offer classes to challenge their brightest and most promising Anglo students. Without an opportunity to demonstrate their skills, an area in which Latin@ students might really show their academic worth is not even considered a legitimate strength.

The participants also described the lack of Latina teachers in schools as perpetuating difficulties in recruitment. Oregon's failure to meet the parity goals set forth in the 1991 Minority Teachers Act was reportedly partially related to a lack of "push behind it politically"

(Zheng, 2013). This failure to seek parity also mirrors the suspicions offered by the conservative majority on the US Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Roberts, “of efforts to achieve diversity in workforces, believing that they amount to reverse racism or racial preferences” (Blake, 2014). These equity issues reduce the number of college-ready Latina students eligible for teacher education programs, hindering recruitment efforts.

Professional role models. Several participants spoke of the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in schools, along with the overrepresentation of Latin@s in low-skilled labor, clerical, and educational assistance roles, as perpetuating the difficulty in recruiting Latinas to teacher education programs. Rosa, a high-school counselor who works with first-generation and historically underserved students, many of whom are Latin@s, expands on this:

They're 14 [year-old students] and they've created this kind of circle around themselves as far as what is acceptable for them to be when they grow up and they may have never seen anyone, who looks like them in a ... power position or in an authority position. They may assume that all the people around them are white; so, therefore, you know ... without even really saying it out loud, it's like, “Well, teachers are white and I'm not white, so I can't do that.”

Norma focuses the lens on the largest Latin@ population in Oregon describing the need for Mexican and Mexican American professional teacher role modes:

I feel that Mexican students in particular suffer more discrimination. It's almost easier for students from Argentina or Brazil [or other Spanish speaking countries] because it's just the [conquest and anti-immigration]

relationship between the two countries [US and Mexico]. I think it's even more crucial to have Mexican or Mexican American teachers.

Maya explains how, despite, the enormous contributions of Latina educational assistants, particularly in ESL classrooms, structural power differences marginalize the roles of these professionals. Maya felt that encouraging and supporting these women to move into full teaching positions—such as funding for grow your own teacher education programs—is not rigorously pursued in her district:

There isn't that talk. There is more talk [among teachers and administrators] of survival in [the sense of supporting classroom teachers by] having a dependable assistant [in the classroom rather than encouraging assistants to pursue a teaching career]. I think it's kind of just a job [that needs to be filled]. It's a temporary job, it's not ... they don't even offer benefits unless you're permanent and we don't have permanent jobs very often. [...] And then, of course, the educational program would be years of study and coursework. [Some] EAs [educational assistants] come with a strong educational background; ... others have never had [the opportunity for] formal education ... and we don't have a college right next to us.

Likewise, while Glemer praised the work of Latino Family Liaisons, who offer students and families school-, college-, and career-related resources and bilingual Family Access Network advocates, who connect students' families with community resources to help meet their basic needs, she clearly felt that their roles did not carry the same advocacy power as Latina teachers:

It [her relationship with the Latino family liaison at her school] was very professional of course, and I always treat him like an equal, very professional. And the kids, they saw us both in our own, let's say, role, and they know that my role is different. They saw me in a different level in meetings and with more power when I had to say something. I think they felt it and saw in different ways. ... They saw us working as a team and it was a good team.

Even though Glemer and Maya treated their support staff as equals, their students, other teachers, and administrators understood the power differential. These participants' experiences highlight a crucial argument as to why it is so important that Latin@ students see people like them in positions of power—encouraging students to respect everyone, regardless of their professional role, is simply not enough.

Perceived value of the teaching profession. The majority of the participants describe how a low perceived value of teaching is an obstacle to encouraging Latin@ students to enter the field of teaching. Three of the participants described experiences when parents who were teachers or educational assistants influenced their perceived value of a teaching career.

Sonia reports:

My parents, they were happy, but they weren't too sure about what was going on. I mean, they were proud. My dad would say to his friends that I was going to be a secretary because he must have [believed that occupation] had more value. But I was going to be a teacher!

Miriam, too, describes how the low perceived value of teaching impacts the recruitment of Latina teacher candidates:

It depends on their family, how well educated was your family, how ambitious is your family. There are many factors that come into place. For a well-educated person, teaching is great because they know about it. Or if a person was not that [educated], "Oh, I want my kid to be a doctor. I want my kid to be an attorney." Teachers are [not as valued] ... because [their families] want more.

Norma, like Miriam, reported that the high cost–benefit ratio of a teaching career has an impact on teacher recruitment. Norma explains:

I think the reason [people of color] don't want to teach in schools are some of the same reasons that nobody wants to teach. It's low pay. It's extremely stressful. The curriculum is very streamlined. You're not allowed as much autonomy as in the past. The curriculum is very mandated. It's just that things have changed a lot. And the pay is pretty low. We're struggling and you're supposed to be professionals. ... I mean, until the whole teaching profession is raised [teachers' salary reflects the compensation and respect given to qualified professionals with similar educational and credentialing requirements], it's difficult. You know, it's really difficult.

Two participants who held bachelor's degrees reported that the value of gaining a teaching certificate did not outweigh the cost and time of returning to school to complete a graduate-level teacher education program. Rezi explains her decision in the following way:

I was going to school for so long and I had all these bills that I knew I was going to have to pay back that I figured, I have my BA in early childhood [and I] remember people saying, “Well, that’s all you really need to work in a preschool and get a pretty good-paying job.” And so, I figured it was time for me to get out of school, get started working and start paying off some of these loans and things that I had. And so, that made an impact on my thinking about if I would be able to continue my education to get the teaching credential.

Merriam explained that the flexibility and earning potential of working from her home-based Spanish language school where she can attend to her own child’s needs has kept her from returning to school to pursue a teaching certificate:

I wanted to give my attention to my child. I think the first five years are the most important. So I focus on my child and what I can do to be home when she needs me and make some money. If I [expand my business], I can make as much as [public school teachers].

Several of the participants reported that sisters who had pursued different careers had become successful with two-year technical certificates, or had been offered tuition reimbursement from their employers to complete a bachelor’s degree. Michelle reported that her sister had “became an x-ray tech and MRI tech, so she’s in a good place, in a good financial place.” Sonia described the financial challenges of starting her first teaching job, “My sister who is five years younger, was kind enough, she would send me her clothes, as she was making more money with her AA degree, ten times more money than I was.” Rezi reported, “My sister ... got a

job with Intel and ... she got her BS [with employer financial support] while she was working there.”

All of the women in this study reported using scholarships, grants, and loans to cover the cost of their undergraduate or graduate degrees. Although these higher education funding sources were, on one hand, reported as supporting their educational trajectory, the cost of teacher preparation was also portrayed as a challenge to the recruitment of Latina teachers. For example, the women in this study explained that many Latin@ students and families perceive that they cannot afford college, or do not have access to state or federal funding due to their immigration status. Rezi explains:

Financial is always a big part of it and there's ... the immigration [issue]. There's a lot of people that are raised here and, now, they're at that point where they can ... go to college. ... These people are [undocumented]. ... The ones that have been raised here may have ideals about wanting to be a teacher ... a lot of people are set aside.

These *testimonios* illustrate how the perceived value of a teaching career is related to socioeconomic status and is reflected in the perpetuation of occupational segregation. Low-income families are challenged by the length of time and financial burden of pursuing a teaching career and may not perceive the career as outweighing faster tracks to careers with similar salary potential and social respect (Ramirez, 2010). Higher income families make career decisions based on salary potential, maintaining wealth, and, ultimately, social respect. Middle-class families, particularly those with at least one parent who teaches, may have knowledge of options available for financing a teaching career, less immediate need to contribute to family income, and lower aversion to accruing debt; they may also perceive teaching as providing acceptable

wealth and respect. However, recruitment is only the first step; participants also reported factors that they saw as impacting the retention of Latina teachers.

Retention. All of the women in this study explained that the retention of Latina teachers would be improved by giving greater value to Latina teacher' perspectives, cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Latina Perspectives. Michelle reports that feelings of isolation discourage in-service Latina teachers and contribute to retention issues:

I think there's comfort in numbers; when I moved here and I started teaching at my school, I felt very alienated because I didn't have any other Latinas around me like I had in California. And there was something to be said for that, that there's comfort teaching with women or people that have similar experiences [to] you. And, it's alienating, that experience [of being on your own].

She continues, speaking about issues of Latina teacher retention:

Just because you [Anglo teachers] come from California, doesn't mean you have training working with the Latino community. Which is a big misconception. I did serve a lot of low-income places and ... some people that come, they don't know what it is like. They have best practices but they have best practices for ... middle- to high-income areas. ... When you're a Title 1 school in California and you're working with Latinos, you bring community together.

Michelle's *testimonio* illustrates how Latina teachers working in isolation are not encouraged to share their perspectives on education, particularly on the education of Latin@

students. Michelle highlights the argument that building an inclusive and diverse teacher workforce contributes to retention efforts.

Cultural knowledge. For the overwhelming majority of the women in this study, the retention issues was reported to be improved by respecting the cultural knowledge that Latina teachers bring to schools. Norma expressed ideas similar to Michelle's, explaining the connection between valuing Latina teachers' cultural knowledge and retention:

I just took a multicultural environment as a given. And so, when I came here [rural Oregon], I realized that there were many people in the community that really didn't know people from other cultural backgrounds. ... It was really difficult to understand ... how people could come to a certain understanding of the world if they didn't have [a multicultural] experience. How would they understand ... what a Chicano was or know what *La Raza* meant and why had they never heard of Cesar Chavez? Well, because they didn't grow up where I did; I just assumed there was a nation-wide understanding of multiculturalism, but I was mistaken and we still have a lot of work to do. [She continues describing how valuing different cultural perspectives may contribute to the retention of Latina teachers] And then recognizing the extra value that they [Latina teachers] bring [to schools] and giving them more autonomy and letting them share some [culturally specific] ideas that are outside of the box [of scripted curriculum] and letting them [make their teaching and learning relevant to their students].

Rosa describes herself this way:

I am fifth generation [American]. My dad's family is from Texas. So, they became US citizens when Texas became [part of the] United States and not Mexico. I asked my dad, "Do we have family in Mexico?" And he said "No. They're all in Texas." So, part of my

family [Rosa's father's family] refers to us as Texicans. It's, you know, the border crossed us; we didn't cross the border."

The women in this study reported that Latinas' cultural knowledge is seen as less valuable: while an in-depth knowledge of European history is considered core content, and knowledge of Central/South American history is considered elective course material. Inclusion of Chican@/Latin@ history in majority-culture schools has been reported as "unpatriotic" (Suarez, 2013, Banned in Arizona), and continues to influence contentious battles over what to include in standardized education. Majority-culture schools' scripted curricula do not provide opportunities to engage students in the capacity-building (i.e., *conscientization*) that is so relevant to Latin@ students' lives—and that represents a key factor in retaining Latina teachers. Likewise, the participants described how having their unique skill sets contributed to retention.

Skills and abilities. Glemer reported that her decision to stay at her school for six years was influenced by the fact that her administrators valued her bilingual skills, not only in her role as a Spanish and ELL teacher, but also as a mentor to Latin@ students, who was able to contribute to building a school culture of success. However, her abilities were not valued by her teaching peers outside of her language department, and she felt alienated; "I was never greeted by my co-workers in six years ... They never said hello in six years and these were my coworkers." To further highlight the importance of her bilingual skills in her successful mentoring of Latin@ students, Glemer explains the dismay that was felt when a new Latino administrator came to the district without bilingual skills:

They [the students] were so happy and excited when they saw him as a principal; I was as well. And then the kids were speaking [to him] in Spanish and he couldn't. ... That made

a huge impact that he couldn't speak Spanish. ... I didn't know that was that important to the kids until they told me. They looked to me for answers. I was in shock because I didn't know.

Norma, a bilingual ELL teacher whose first language was English, described the effort it took her to develop skills for working with English learners:

It took me over two and a half years to get my ESOL endorsement. That was a huge uphill battle. And really, shouldn't ... everybody [all teachers] have an ESOL endorsement? Shouldn't all teachers know about second language learners? Well, they [teacher education programs and teacher standards and practices commission; make it extremely difficult to do that.

Norma goes on to explain that she has the ability to build stronger home connections with her students' families, but that role is not encouraged:

I'm coming across this problem where I have a student that I would like to see outside of school because I would like to be the student's mentor, but there are policies in place that prevent me from doing that. ... There are strict guidelines, professional guidelines that are in place for a reason. However, those guidelines can hamper the relationship building that is so important for success for students. I think thinking outside the box and listening to [Latin@] teachers' ideas about how to build those family relationships is important, because if the family is not on board, that student is going to have a very difficult time.

The women's *testimonios* describe how Latina teachers' skills and abilities to form authentic caring relationships with Latin@ students and families were not valued by their peers.

Bilingual skills were primarily valued for information dissemination, but not respected as a unique skill that contributed to building a welcoming school environment for Latin@s and improving Latin@ students' academic success. This lack of consideration of Latina teachers' skills and abilities was described as impacting retention.

Summary

This chapter presented the four findings from this study and was organized by the research questions. Extensive space was made for statements from the women's *testimonios* in order to center their lived experiences as evidence of a collective story.

With regard to the first finding, the women in this study described similar factors that impacted their educational experiences. Their socioeconomic status was influenced by the American and global sociopolitical landscape, which shaped their early learning experiences, perceptions of school climate, and levels of exposure to a college-going culture. They experienced schools as sites of English dominance that marginalized cultural and linguistic diversity. They experienced hostile reactions to their Latina identity and described the role of allies in helping them to navigate these hostile encounters and in providing educational resources. These positive and negative experiences had a profound impact on their educational trajectories.

The second finding was that all of the women entered the teaching profession both for personal transformation and to disrupt and transform educational inequities. They described the desire to change schools and promote social change, particularly for Latin@ students. They spoke of their persistence in the teaching profession as a reflection of their unconditional commitment to give back to and serve their communities.

In the third finding, all nine women described the valuable roles they play in creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces. They described the value they add to schools through their unique skills and abilities, as well as how they serve students, families, and their communities. This was a result of their lived experiences, as well as their roles as culturally and linguistically responsive teachers.

Lastly, the fourth finding indicated that the recruitment of Latina teachers was filled with challenges. These challenges included poor educational foundations and experiences, a lack of Spanish-speaking Latin@ professional role models in schools, and the low perceived value of a career in teaching. The women in this study felt that valuing Latina teachers' perspectives, cultural knowledge, skill, and abilities would improve retention.

In Chapter 5 this researcher will use CRT, LatCrit, and community cultural wealth theoretical frameworks as analytical tools to interpret the data. This interpretation will be informed by ongoing discussions with the participants, and will incorporate the sociohistorical and sociopolitical context of Latin@ education and cultural theories, as well as literature on adult learning and development.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study used a *testimonio* methodology to collect qualitative data through oral word interviews. As a methodology, *testimonio* serves understanding and addressing educational inequities. As a data collection method, *testimonio* engages participants in a “critical reflection of their personal experience within particular sociopolitical realities” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 364); *testimonio* was used in the present study to document the experiences of Latina teachers situated within a historical lineage of educational inequities. This researcher also collected data through document analysis and the researcher’s journal. Participants in this study comprised nine educators, all of whom identified as Latinas. Bearing witness to the *testimonios* was the first step in exploring the participants lived realities along the teacher trajectory. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized by the research questions. On-going conversations with the participants shaped the interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations. Four research questions drove this study:

1. What had the greatest impacts on Latina teachers’ educational experiences?
2. How do Latina teachers make meaning of their decision to enter and persist in the teaching profession?
3. What are Latina teachers’ perceptions of the role they play in students’ educational experiences and outcomes?
4. What can Latina teachers tell educational leaders about recruitment and retention?

The data collected in this study revealed that key sociocultural factors impacted participants’ educational experiences and opportunities. To fully understand these experiences, the lenses of CRT and LatCrit permitted this researcher to conduct an intersectional analysis of the influences of race and racism, along with socioeconomic status, color, ethnicity, gender,

language, culture, religion, geography, and immigration history. This analysis revealed structural and institutional racism and educational inequities unique to Latinas, consistent with the historical marginalization of Latinas in US society. The participants described largely oppressive educational experiences in US majority-culture schools that led to feelings of self-doubt, isolation, and discrimination. A community cultural wealth lens highlighted a strengths-based perspective of experiences. These women attributed their positive school experiences and their ability to resist these assaults to the support they received from family, friends, and allies both within and outside of their schools.

These nine women overwhelmingly reported the same motivations as influencing their decisions to enter a teaching career. Common motivations included (a) personal transformation and agency; (b) the possibility to promote change in both the education system and in society as a whole, so as to improve the experiences and outcomes of students, particularly Latin@ students; and (c) the importance of giving back to their communities. Furthermore, they described their persistence as educators as being driven by their deep commitment to their students, as well as by their resiliency and resistance to educational inequities. The importance of giving back to their communities was also reported as influencing their persistence as educators.

These women also described the unique roles they play as Latina educators as being important, as they see themselves as role models for each and every student, with important implications for Latin@ students and their families. These women also help to create equitable and inclusive learning spaces and opportunities from the perspectives of race, class, language, and culture consciousness, as opposed to the frequently espoused ideals of color-, class-, and culture-blind thinking. These women perceived historical, social, political, and economic structures as impacting Latin@s' educational foundations. The low number of professional

Latin@ role models, along with the perceived low value of a teaching career were reported as challenges to the recruitment of Latina teachers, and all participants agreed that hiring and retention would improve if there was more social and systemic cultural responsiveness and sensitivity. The participants also stressed the importance of a school leadership that was committed to the deliberate cultivation of productive and sustained integration and interaction among teachers and students from different classes, races, and cultures, as well as respect for Latina teachers' perspectives, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

This chapter provides a discussion of the study findings, with the implications of these findings presented through a race-, class-, and culture-conscious counternarrative. This collective story of the participants' trajectories as teachers challenges the dominant discourse on the Latina teacher gap, which often promotes a deficit view of Latinas while making superficial claims of race neutrality, meritocracy, and equal opportunity.

In writing this counternarrative, a CRT and LatCrit framework was used to theorize and examine the ways that race and racism intersect with four other forms of marginalization: classism, monolingualism, ethnocentrism, and nativism. To highlight the participants' resistance to these forms of subordination and to situate participants' experiential knowledge and cultural strengths as the central point of this study, this researcher viewed the women's *testimonios* through a community cultural wealth framework (Yosso, 2005). This approach highlights the various forms of capital—including resistant, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and aspirational—that were found to be present and nurtured within the women's families and communities, and that contributed to their persistence throughout their teacher trajectory. Adult learning and development theories, as well as relevant education policy, pedagogy, research, and practice were also considered in the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the findings.

The interpretation of the findings was influenced by the researcher's lived experiences within the research location, as well as professional experiences working in teacher education, higher education leadership, and adult learning. In addition, ongoing discussions, cultural intuitions, and input from participants helped to shape the interpretation of these findings. This researcher remains open to other interpretations, and acknowledges that other interpretations of the findings may reveal alternative perspectives on the same research questions.

Although Oregon recognizes the need for it to improve the number of culturally and linguistically diverse and culturally responsive and effective teachers in both K–12 classrooms and in teacher preparation programs, the present study suggests that, if racial equity remains a statewide goal, an intentional and strategic collaborative effort will be required to effectively recruit and retain Latina teachers. Research that recognizes the salience of race, class, culture, and ethnicity in the discourse on the historical perpetuation of whiteness in the teaching profession is largely absent. The present study therefore contributes to the gap in the literature regarding the educational experiences and perspectives of Latina teachers who work in rural Oregon schools. These schools report high poverty, rapidly growing Latin@ student enrollments, along with an underrepresentation of Latinas in the teacher workforce.

The Trajectory: P–12 Schooling, College, and on Being *La Maestra*

This study focused on the lived experiences of Latina teachers, from their entry into the majority-culture school system through their current positions as teachers. By covering this entire period, the present study connects early learning with adult learning, specifically in the context of pursuing a teaching career. The findings from this study suggest that, at three major phases in the teacher trajectory—P–12 schooling, college, and in-service teaching—all of the participants experienced educational inequities, as well as both personal wounding and healing.

These experiences shaped their motivations to enter and persist as teachers. They were motivated by personal transformation, as well as by the desire to promote change in the school system and in society as a whole. The participants hoped that this change would improve student experiences and outcomes, and would allow these women to give back to their communities.

P–12 schooling. Participants reported that a wide variety of sociocultural factors impacted their early, primary, and secondary educational journeys. All participants reported that socioeconomic status, social class, language, culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and geography (i.e., where they lived or attended school) significantly impacted their educational experiences and opportunities. In Chapter 4, this researcher provided examples from participants' *testimonios* that describe how these interrelated, contextually situated, and changing factors impacted both participants' educational experiences and their overall personal development. During the P–12 schooling years, these factors were influenced by the sociopolitical context and manifested as experiences of educational inequity, personal wounding, and personal healing; all of these experiences were key to participants' future decisions to enter and persist in teaching careers.

Educational inequities: Access to high quality early childhood education, effective academic preparation for college, and exposure to a college-going culture. The participants described inequities in their access to high quality early childhood education, effective college preparation, and exposure to a college-going culture. Their descriptions of educational inequities illuminated links between race, class, language, culture, gender, and school equity that have surfaced in other research (Davila & Aviles de Bradley; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Huber, 2010; Irizarry, 2012). The participants reported that reflecting on these experiences contributed to their development of a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) through which they challenged unacceptable educational disparities. They also described their resistance to these injustices as

shaping their understanding of the contradictory nature of schooling, which often marginalizes and oppresses while holding the potential to transform (Yosso, 2005). These negative experiences, together with how these women responded to these inequities, ultimately influenced how participants made meaning of their decisions to enter and persist as teachers, motivated by the possibility for personal transformation and agency.

To illustrate this pattern of racist and classist structural and systematic inequities, in the upcoming section this researcher provides descriptions of educational injustices related to early learning, academic preparation for college, and exposure to a college-going culture; together, these stories offer a collective counternarrative that challenges the dominant ideology on equal opportunity and that illuminates participants' individual and shared motivations for transformation. This researcher then situates these experiences within the relevant scholarly, sociohistorical, and sociopolitical contexts. Lastly, this researcher shares an affirming picture of how study participants drew on forms of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) to nurture and empower their resistance.

Early childhood education. The participants in the present study described a common theme of inequitable access to high quality early learning; this made an impact on the women's school readiness and trajectory through the P-12 school years. Rezi, an early childhood educator, grew up in a Spanish-dominant home in a primarily white urban area in California. When asked about her early childhood education experiences, she responded "Oh, none. I don't remember anything. ...When I did start school ... I remember [being told] I was kind of behind in a lot of things, and I was held back a grade." Rezi's family had fled to California from racist conditions in Texas, and throughout her early school years in California, her father, the family's sole wage earner, struggled to find a permanent job with a living wage. Rezi reported, "Financially, my

family struggled the whole time during my growing up as far as having enough money to pay rent and things like that.” Consequently, Rezi’s family did not have the resources to afford high quality early childhood education, and when she entered a majority-culture school with no bilingual education, she was assessed based on her academic abilities in her second language and culture, which resulted in grade retention and early tracking into remedial learning groups. Despite reporting that, “It didn’t take too long to understand and start learning the language,” Rezi repeated second grade, remained in remedial learning groups, and experienced dismissive treatment by her teachers. This treatment included assignments of “passing out papers or collecting papers or doing some extra things that ... the other kids didn’t get [or have] to do” to keep her busy.

Glemer was born in Colombia, and both of her parents were teachers. She said that “the [wealthy] are the ones who can pay [for a] certain level of education in private schools.” Glemer described school readiness as being one of the benefits of quality “early stimulation in education,” which in Colombia, begins at age one.

Both Rezi and Glemer’s descriptions highlight the importance of socioeconomic status and systematic inequities, although Rezi’s experience also incorporates how sociocultural factors, racism, classism, and nativism work together in the US to impact Latinas negatively at the earliest and, arguably, most important early learning years. Rezi’s *testimonio* supports the established link between early achievement gaps and unequal early learning opportunities in the US (Oregon Department of Education, Kindergarten Assessment, 2014; US Department of Education, Early Learning, 2014) for linguistic and culturally diverse students.

Academic preparation for college. Along with discussing concerns regarding their school readiness, the majority of the women in the present study described experiencing inequitable

access to high quality academic preparation. Maya, a bilingual ELL teacher, reflected on the discrepancy between the school experience she had at her rural Oregon school, which was situated in an economically depressed timber town, and the experience she had at the school she attended after she moved out of Oregon during her second year of high school:

I was way behind, of course, just because of the difference in ... the schools ... and [after I moved] I went to a school that didn't have any [second] language [learning] needs ... or it was just a higher level of kids who had parents who focused on their education. ... I mean, one whole English class [was] Shakespeare; there are just certain things that are awkward at different places. ... There was a difference in the curriculum.

Norma recalled how her low-income, underfunded, and segregated urban school in California, which had a primarily African American and Latin@ student population, perpetuated social and economic stratification by denying her an inclusive high-quality school climate, curriculum, and culture:

It was a high poverty area. I don't know if they had high expectations of anybody. I remember being extremely bored in school, not challenged, just doing what I needed to do. I don't remember being really excited about projects.

Norma, like Maya, described a common theme that emerged in the present study: that race, class, and geography negatively impacted academic preparation for college. This finding mirrors Oregon state statistics that report that rural students, economically disadvantaged students, and students of color disproportionately experience less rigorous academic preparation (Oregon Department of Education, Equity Plan, 2012).

College-going culture. Rosa, a school counselor who is also from rural Oregon, grew up in a working-class, English-speaking family, but without the privilege of attending a school that provided a college-ready culture for every student—and certainly not for first-generation Latin@ college-going students. She said:

In my husband's [Anglo] family, all six of his older brothers and sisters went to college because mom and dad went to college. ... in my house, we never talked about college. ... I only met with [my school counselor] once a year ... to discuss what classes I would take next ... and what electives [I wanted] to take.

Lola reported that many of the students at her rural, predominantly low-income Oregon high school talked about going to college; however, "AP English was the only AP class" offered at her school, "not a lot of the [male students]" took the SAT, and "only a handful of [kids in general went] to college."

According to a recent analysis of the US student achievement gap, socioeconomic status is the greatest single predictor of educational achievement and college attainment (The White House, 2014; Reardon, 2013; Rowan, Hall, & Haycock, 2010). Cashin (2014) argues that the achievement gap for income is twice the size of the gap for race; Cashin posits that affluent parents' buying power—spending up to nine times as much money on developing the talents of their children as can low income parents—may contribute to these educational gaps. However, in contrast to Cashin's findings, in 2011–12, eighth-grade Latin@ students in Oregon had greater achievement gaps in reading and in math than did economically disadvantaged comparison groups (Oregon Department of Education, *Efforts to Close Achievement Gaps*, 2014). Moreover, the participants in the present study did not experience teachers and schools as examining class,

race, or the implications of economic and social policies in discourses on meritocracy. The women described schools as functioning from the general assumption of white upper- and middle-class normality, resulting in a disconnection from participants' lived experiences, as well as from the perspectives of working-class and poor families as a whole (Jones & Vagle, 2013).

When opportunity gaps—such as access to affordable, high quality, culturally responsive, and effective early education; rigorous college preparatory curriculum; and exposure to a college-going culture—are viewed through the lenses of sociocultural, CRT, and LatCrit theoretical frameworks, unjust school policies and practices—such as waiting lists for affordable, culturally relevant, high quality early learning and care; fee-based full-day kindergarten; academic tracking; and unequal school funding—emerge as racialized institutional inequities. Coupled with structural racism (e.g., housing insecurity, occupational segregation, the wage gap, and anti-immigrant sentiments), these inequities have historically marginalized Latin@ readiness for school and achievement in the P–12 schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Haque & Winsor, 2013), inhibiting Latin@ progression in the teacher trajectory.

However, the women in this study remind readers that students from working class and impoverished backgrounds are capable of being academically successful. Yosso (2005) cautions that majoritarian stories often “perpetuate myths that darker skin and poverty correlate with bad neighbors & bad schools” (p. 9) and “silence or dismiss people who offer evidence contradicting these racially unbalanced portrayals” (p. 9). Such stories often leave out racialized discourses of social, economic, and political injustices. The women in this study provide counternarratives that disrupt the dominant discourse, which portrays the social reproduction of Latina underachievement from a deficit perspective, perpetuating racially essentializing accounts regarding the underrepresentation of Latina teachers.

In addition to reminding readers that students from working class and impoverished background are often only capable of being academically successful at the cost of tremendous effort and sacrifice (Scherrer, 2014), the women in this study described how they drew upon multiple forms of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005)—in particular, resistant capital and aspirational capital—to promote their P–12 school persistence in spite of these structural and institutional inequities. By reflecting on these experiences, the women in this study were able to describe how they made meaning of their motivation to teach. Norma, for example, describes resisting the lack of high quality early education:

I remember doing so much outside of school, like, my mother encouraged me to enter writing contests, poetry contests, [and] art contests. I spent a lot of time reading and writing and making things at home. And she would check my writing. She also encouraged me to invent things on my own, make things on my own. And so, I spent a lot of time as a child making contraptions.

Sonia describes resisting the lack of a rigorous curriculum and access to a college-going culture by taking advantage of activities offered by youth-focused community organizations:

We would get on the school bus [from middle school] on a Saturday and they [a community-based education program] would take us to Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University, Pomona] and ... a professor ... would talk to us about college and talk to us about ... psychology or sociology, [academic subjects] that I [had] never heard of because I wasn't in the top rank in school. We weren't exposed to that kind of stuff. This went on for the school year ... maybe once a month. We went to different college campuses and got a taste of what it was [like] to be on a campus... That was so crucial.

So, I did have an idea of what college must be like even though my parents didn't [have this experience].

Sonia, like the other participants, benefited from using the resistant capital she gained from her family and community to challenge structural and systematic inequity and subordination in school. Participants also described drawing on aspirational capital they had gained through the *cuentos* (stories) and *consejos* (advice) they had received from their families and relatives, which encouraged a culture of possibility in spite of opportunity gaps perpetuated by social and institutional inequities. Norma described listening to relatives speaking at a family reunion; she reported that, "there were over a hundred people there. People got up and spoke about the messages of overcoming obstacles and seeking higher education and having a voice in society."

Glemer described how members of the working class in Columbia used aspirational capital to overcome socioeconomic challenges to accessing quality learning opportunities:

They don't have the chance and they don't have the option. They stay in the public system. Now, at home they [families] have their own way to push and engage the kids to keep fighting and trying hard and be successful. ... It doesn't matter if you are here or there. You need to be successful.

In sharing these lived sociocultural realities, oppressions, and resistances, these women described a collective memory of transformative resistance (Delgado, 2006), and described how they made meaning of their decision to teach as a way to claim and share the Freirean (1970) educational goals of personal liberation and social emancipation.

In the following section, this researcher provides a counternarrative that describes how the racist and classist structural and institutional inequities reported by the participants did not emerge alone, but rather were associated with other forms of subordination, such as monolingualism and culture-, gender-, and identity-based discrimination. All of these forces shaped these women's motivation to teach, offering them the possibility to promote change in the school system and to improve student experiences and outcomes.

Personal wounding: Language, culture, and ethnic identity. The women in this study described how racist microaggressions inflicted against their language, culture, and ethnic identity impacted their P-12 school years. These women's experiences appear to support CRT scholars' assertion that people of color in the US experience multiple forms of oppression (Yosso, 2005). More specific to Latinas, a LatCrit theoretical lens and the participants' *testimonios* reveal how race and racism intersect with other forms of marginalization directly related to language (*monolingualism*), culture (*ethnocentrism*), and ethnic identity (*nativism*). These marginalizing experiences led several of the participants to internalize perceptions of academic inferiority, self-doubt, and alienation from their US schools. These experiences of being different appeared to challenge the dominant discourse of race neutrality, meritocracy, and equal opportunity in American schools as it relates to the opportunity gap (Howard, 2010, Huber, 2010).

Ultimately, these experiences of being treated differently by teachers, school officials, and peers significantly impacted participants' academic experiences, which participants reported as influencing their future motivations to teach. Teaching offered these women a way to promote change in the school system and to improve experiences and outcomes for each and every student, especially Latin@s.

Language and culture. The participants in the present study learned that Spanish was neither valued nor welcome, either inside or outside of their US schools. These women experienced their cultural heritage being devalued and replaced with an essentializing view based solely on ethnic identity, which excluded the context of their lived realities (Howard, 2010). The participants who attended primary and secondary US majority-culture schools described these institutions as sites of English dominance and hegemonic power structures that did not welcome culturally and linguistically diverse learners or encourage dynamic bilingual language development (Palmer & Martinez, 2013). Maya remembered her father explaining that “we don’t really need it [Spanish]”; she referred to his use of English as a “survival language.” Like Maya, Rosa explained that, despite the fact that her father primarily spoke English, the links between race, language, and culture, as well as the expectation for monolingualism in school, discouraged her father’s participation in school events and activities. Rosa said she was more “typically [seen] with [her] mom [an Anglo] than dad.” In the US, the English language has historically been used in the colonization of Latin@s and indigenous peoples of the Americas and, beginning with the World War I era, arguments for bilingual education have been deployed for political ends under the guise of seeking educational equity (Spring, 2010). These cultural politics have given emergent bilingual students little encouragement in historical and contemporary US majority-culture school systems (Palmer & Martinez, 2013).

Mirroring historical racial marginalization, several of the participants in this study described a void between their home and school language and culture. Sonia explained that after leaving her English-dominant school she came home to a world that only spoke Spanish: “you had Spanish radio stations, Spanish TV or novellas, Spanish food, everything ... [Catholic] Mass was in Spanish.” At the same time, as noted in previous studies (Huber, 2010) the

participants described these language differences as shifting from merely challenging to deeply wounding when teachers explicitly or implicitly viewed speaking Spanish as a problem, deficiency, or impairment (Huber, 2010; Huber & Cueva, 2012), thereby demeaning the families who were the emotional bedrock for these students.

The majority of the women in this study reported being really quiet and shy, and not talking very much during their primary school years; this was true despite the fact that over half of the US-born participants reported English as being their home language. The normalcy of silent phases in early-childhood second-language acquisition is hotly debated, and the case has been made for the need to take into account the linguistic, socioeconomic, cultural, familial, contextual, and individual influences in English acquisition (Roberts, 2014). These sociocultural factors have also been found to influence communication patterns between students and teachers (Delpit, 2006; Howard, 2010). Other researchers recognize that, regardless of what language is spoken at home or the role of cultural factors, being silenced (as opposed to choosing silence as resistance), is a negative consequence of the early internalization of racial microaggressions (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Paluck & Green, 2009). Furthermore, the acceptance of a racial hierarchy, conscious or unconscious, often results in feelings of not belonging in classrooms (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). As a resistance strategy to perceived hostile environments, remaining silent has been attributed to disengagement and missed opportunities for sharing diverse perspectives, and may lead to perceptions of being pushed out of school (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014; Irizarry, 2012; Ware, 2012).

Individual and ethnic identity. In this study, the participants described experiencing racially and ethnically charged microaggressions inside and outside of schools. Their stories depict a pattern of racial marginalization, and reveal how easily the structural and systematic

problem of racism can be recast as individual students' problems (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; McCreary, 2011). In this way, teachers and school leaders avoid accountability for systematic racism and perpetuate normalized color-blind thinking, protecting the privilege of whiteness in the teaching force.

In addition to negatively impacting the way the study participants saw themselves and the world, these women described ongoing racialized identity microaggressions that were inflicted verbally, nonverbally, or in a layered fashion (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). Kohli and Solórzano (2012) argue that daily exposure to a racially homogenous teacher workforce represents an identity microaggression. For the participants in the present study, these negative experiences resulted in inequitable opportunities to engage in dialogic learning (i.e., problem posing, reflection, dialogue, action) as well as in the exclusion of their history and culture from the classroom. Another great loss resulting from these oppressive school experiences seemed to be the lost opportunity for developing caring, respectful, and trusting teacher–student interactions. Such interactions, had they existed and had teachers welcomed the social histories and identities of individual students might have encouraged these women to view their ethnic bicultural identity and bilingual skills as assets.

Maya explains, “I don’t feel like there were ever teachers who [explicitly dismissed] me. I think they were just there. I just went to school and did the whole, just get through the day routine.” Michelle further reported, “It wasn’t until fifth grade that I first got that taste of what it would feel like to have a lot of support behind me.” The combination, accumulation, and internalization of racial and ethnic microaggressions resulted in personal wounding. Reflecting on the effects of these daily subtle assaults over the P–12 school years, participants were able to

describe their motivation to transform oppressive school systems and improve future student experiences and outcomes.

The participants described their response to the deep personal wounding of racialized microaggressions as influencing their motivation to teach. The women's counternarratives illustrate how they used navigational and linguistic capital to overcome and challenge subordination, succeed in school, and within that process, to develop a cultural knowledge of resistance to systematic inequities. For instance, the majority of the participants described navigating hostile school systems by engaging with, rather than disengaging from, their schools. In this way, they demonstrated high achieving behavior through individual agency; this strategy had the added benefit of connecting them with social networks, which were influential in their academic achievement. Sonia described being involved in multiple events and activities:

I was very outgoing. I was a cheerleader ... I was involved in Red Cross ... I set up blood drive[s] in my school ... I went through a Red Cross leadership camp ... I was selected to go to Girls State [youth leadership summer camp], and after I graduated [high school], [I was selected to attend a] program on critical thinking in elementary education. ... I was Miss Social, but also I was nice to all groups.

Sonia's engagement with her school and community connected her to social networks that helped her navigate systematic inequities such as academic tracking. In addition, Sonia's linguistic capital profited from her bilingual background, as the experiences of interpreting for her family and aligning herself with friends and families from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds helped her overcome racial microaggressions. For instance, she responded to teachers' hostile comments (i.e., verbal microaggressions), low expectations (i.e., non-verbal microaggressions), and biased standardized tests (i.e., layered microaggressions) (Kohli &

Solórzano, 2012) through using linguistic capital, such as, in Sonia's words, through her "high level of perseverance" and "memorization" skills, as well as through her desire not "to miss anything."

These counternarratives highlight the strategies these women used to successfully navigate oppressive school systems and defy deficit perspective of Latinas. These women, in turn, described these experiences as being motivations to teach, with the hope of promoting change in the school system and improving student experiences and outcomes.

In the section on personal healing, this researcher describes how the participants' responses to the negative effects of structural, systematic, and subtle everyday oppressions were also shaped by the healing influences of allies. These allies, together with the participants' cultural knowledge, contributed to the participants' motivation to teach as a way to promote the potentials of education (*y educación*), as well as to strengthen community well being.

Personal healing. Allies and pedagogies from the home. Despite the disproportionate number of negative effects that the participants had on their educational experiences, the women in this study also described positive forces as making an impact on their educational trajectory. These positive influences manifested in their lived realities as healing forces, which gave them instrumental support in navigating and actualizing the transformative potential of education. These positive forces also motivated the women in this study to teach as a way to return these *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) and promote community well being (Yosso, 2005).

Allies y educación. The majority of the women in this study reported that their mothers, grandmothers, foster mothers, and other female family members made significant contributions to their educational experiences. The participants described their mothers or mother figures as engaged, proactive, and educative in their support and participation in the women's education,

despite the fact that these women were not always welcomed in the school system. Lola described her mother as “always telling stories...” Mirriam marveled at how her mother was “on top of everything,” and Norma remembered how “[her] mother was very clear about the importance of having pride and heritage.” Though mothers and other female family members played an important role in passing on collective knowledge from community experiences of navigating social institutions (Yosso, 2005), these strategies of survival were often not recognized as resistance (Delgado Bernal, 2006) or as parental involvement by majority-culture schools.

While white and middle-class parents are often privileged by school-sponsored parental-involvement practices that offer welcoming opportunities for engagement, these opportunities are often denied to lower-income and racial-minority parents due to their cultural and linguistic differences or demanding work schedules, which majority culture schools often do not address in a positive way (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013). While parental involvement is a proud tradition in US schools, it has little real impact beyond communicating approval for what the school is doing. For example, parents are often invited to participate in evening workshops to build parenting skills, interpret student and statewide assessment data, and sign compacts that “outline the responsibilities of the school staff, parent, and student ... [to] build and sustain a partnership to help the student achieve high academic standards” (Title I Parent Involvement Policy from Maya’s school). The majority of the women in the present study reported that their schools did not appreciate their parents’ engagement, especially if their parents did not agree with the school. Fortunately, the participants in this study also described a collective counternarrative that illuminates a strengths-based, broader conception of families and

how they participate in schooling, as well as the family's role as a healing force in the lives of Latina students.

This extended notion of families includes kin, such as ancestors, uncles, aunts, and close friends (Yosso, 2005). The participants in the present study described their *familia* as playing an important role in promoting emotional healing and in providing lessons for everyday survival in majority-culture schools that often marginalize Latinas. Lola warmly reported that, "It seemed natural for me to have people come and go [in my home] because that's just the way my childhood was, but you kind of become part of those families too. My friends' parents were my parents. ... I called them mom and dad and it was just a pretty close community."

Yosso's (2005) conceptualization of familial, social, and resistant capital as components of community cultural wealth, along with Delgado Bernal's (2006) theories of *pedagogies of the home* were powerful analytic tools for unpacking these women's experiences and revealing the foundations of the participants' personal healing, which manifested in their lives as a deep commitment to staying connected to community resources and promoting community well being.

In Chapter 4, this researcher presented detailed findings regarding the positive forces of family, mentors, and peers. Here, the implications of these positive forces are revealed as a counternarrative to deficit discourses about Latinas that, too often, focus on self-defeating resistance behaviors such as dropping out of school or exhibiting defiant behavior (Delgado Bernal, 2006), thus ending possible trajectories as teachers.

Maya provides a representative counternarrative to deficit perspectives of Latina students by sharing her personal healing, which drew on familial, social, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). These resources made a positive impact on her educational trajectory and ultimately

influenced her decision to teach as a way to give back to her community and contribute to community cultural wealth. Maya was married and had her son as a high school student:

We [Maya and her sisters] didn't fit in [at school] very well. ... I think as kids it affected us. ... We spent a lot of time with my grandmother and hanging out with our cousins. My older sister, she was more studious than I was. So, I would see what she was doing and that she was really a focused student and I knew that I needed to do that. My grandmother always played a big part [in our lives] and I knew she had [high] expectations for us and wanted us to do well. [Maya goes on to explain the support she received through social networks]. He [a bible camp teacher] would tell my sister and I something like "We know what's wrong and right and we know what we need to do as individuals to survive," [and he would] encourage us to try to survive and get through things. I had a couple of months of [my freshman high] school [year] left [after having my son] and I could do my math at home with a tutor ... but I had to go into school [for some classes]. There was a special van for teen moms, [which] would pick us up and ... take us to school and there was a daycare center there. I always felt pretty safe at school. ... [I thought] I would have been an outcast because of my situation and I really wasn't and people were very accepting. I made friends. They embraced me in their families, and my teachers embraced me. ... I recently found a book ... that my high school librarian gave me when I graduated [high school] and she had written a message inside saying, "You're going to be successful whatever you do. Take some wisdom from this as you need to and you've already accomplished so much."... My husband had graduated [high] school [in Mexico] and then he came to [the US] to work. He had a really good family and he was encouraged to go to school and had [completed] a year of special study. He was the one working because I

was still going to school. I think so many people believed in me that they just really pushed me forward.

Stories like Maya's that emerged from the women's *testimonios* illustrate a collective counternarrative whereby participants drew on familial, social, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) throughout their P–12 school years to resist being marginalized by majority-culture schools and these schools' hegemonic notions of families. Allies, along with the women's learned and lived cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities, provided personal healing from the negative effects of oppressive schools that claimed the power and privilege to define policies and practices, such as the standard parental-involvement practices that often marginalize and exclude Latin@ families and communities.

In addition to family support, the participants described how social networks were important lifelines for gaining information and resources for school. The majority of the participants were first-generation college students who did not have the advantages of parents who were familiar with the college-going process or a family history of college culture. As first-generation college students, the women in the study described benefiting from accessing social networks outside of their immediate family to find college-related information, a supportive factor that has been confirmed in other research (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Martinez & Cervera, 2012; Pizarro, 2005; Wortham, Murillo, & Hamann, 2002). However, some of the participants reported limited familial or social capital, instead relying heavily on personal agency drawn from resistant capital that they utilized to challenge school practices that often excluded Latinas from the college-going process. Rosa explains:

I always knew I wanted to go to college. ... I went to my teachers. I had them proof my essays and I talked over what I wanted to write... I was pretty aware I needed certain things in order to be able to apply to colleges. Whatever the directions said, that's what I did.

Rosa's example of self-reliance describes a sense of self-activated healing drawn from resistant capital. For Rosa, as well as for others in this study, drawing on familial, social, and resistant capital provided personal healing and influenced their motivation to teach as a way to maintain connections with their community and its resources, as well as to pass on multiple dimensions of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). They did this with the hope of impacting community well being, particularly the lives of students.

In College. The women in the study reported that sociocultural factors and equity issues also impacted their college-going years. Similar to as in their P-12 school years, the participants described these forces as having manifested in experiences of educational inequities, personal wounding, and personal healing that significantly impacted their access to and persistence in the teacher professional trajectory. Not surprisingly, the participants described these experiences with a critical perspective toward the social and educational injustices that stem from a historical legacy of exclusion and subordination. Although these experiences all stem from unique contextual and situational circumstances, they illuminate a collective experience with similar challenges and supportive forces for all of this study's participants. The factors that participants encountered during their college-going years were reported to have strongly influenced their teacher trajectory.

Educational inequities: College-readiness, advising & counseling, and financing college. In understanding the women's shared histories of colonialization, English-language

dominance, occupational segregation, and nation-wide wage gaps—all of which were mirrored as structural and institutional racism in their schools—it is not surprising that none of them were recruited out of high school into teacher education. However, what was striking was that none of the participants rejected becoming a teacher or working in US schools because of their own negative experiences with educational institutions. In fact, the majority of the participants described entering college with definitive plans to become a classroom teacher or an instructor of the Spanish language, or to work with school-age children. In addition, all of the participants described the transformative potential of education as overriding their experiences of marginalization and subordination. The participants described their compelling interest in disrupting the power and privilege of historically dominant groups in education, and held steadfast to the hope of graduating from college and entering a professional career. However, these aspirations were often met with unexpected challenges resulting from educational inequities in academic college readiness, counseling and advising, and access to financial resources. The participants' resistance to P–12 educational inequities was described as motivating them to become teachers, transform themselves, make changes in the school system, and improve student experiences, as well as to give back to their communities. Despite their intentions as they entered their college-going years, they described experiencing similar educational injustices to those that had negatively impacted their P–12 school years.

Academic and social readiness for college. Several of the participants described discouraging experiences in college that they attributed to their under-preparation for the academic rigor and social system of this new environment. These experiences shocked participants, as none of the women had entered college expecting to fail. Rosa reported:

Even though I was a [high school] valedictorian ... that didn't necessarily mean I was going to be a 4.0 in college. I was not. ... I did not know how to study when I got to college. I did not know what a syllabus was. I did not know that you're supposed to read papers that the college professor passed out to you ... [to get] the assignments [and] when they're due. ... My first term, I earned ... Bs and a B minus. So, I thought I was good to keep my academic scholarships. When I was home ... for Christmas, I got a letter [informing] me that I was on academic probation. ... I had no idea that a B minus in college ... was not worth 3 GPA points. ... So, my GPA ... was below 3.0. I was devastated.

Rosa described how her lack of academic readiness impacted her early college success and exacerbated the extreme pressure she experienced to overcome opportunity gaps and meet the academic requirements she needed to keep her college scholarships.

These unexpected challenges from unequal college readiness are all too common for Latina college students, and have been cited repeatedly in the literature as barriers to the teacher trajectory (Torres, et al, 2004; Irizarry, 2011/2012). However, while many of the women did face this challenge, they also reported experiences that provided counternarratives to the predominance of deficit discourses that often distract from or obscure social justice issues. For example, Sonia used forms of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) to keep alive her hopes to become a teacher and overcome her academic self-doubt. She also managed to resist a personal history of instructors' preconceived low-expectations for her academic success, as well as to counteract her feelings of being invisible in classrooms. Sonia reported:

[My college professor] was this brilliant woman [who later in her career became the college president] and I was going to have a lot of classes with her. ... So, I went [to her office] and knocked on her door, and I said, “Hi. My name is Sonia Gonzalez, and I’m going to be in two of your classes and I want you to know me. I want you to know the way I am.”

Sonia goes on to explain how her brave actions constituted resistance to a lack of college academic preparation, which she had internalized as being the result of her low intelligence. Had Sonia succumbed to the belief that she was a less qualified college student, she might have abandoned her teacher trajectory—one that ultimately led to 37 years in the teaching profession. She said:

I learned ... that I had no choice. ... It’s not like I had money. ... I had to work hard to make money to stay in college. I had to work hard in my studies so that I could continue to get [my] scholarship. I wanted to be [successful].

The participants’ descriptions of academic gaps and social adjustments illuminate and confirm what is likely a widespread challenge that unfairly reduces the number of Latina teachers in the United States (White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2014).

Counseling and advising. In addition to the lack of access to rigorous academic preparation for college and a lack of social support, several of the participants described other educational inequities, such as being marginalized by poor college counseling and academic advising. For example, Rezi reported never receiving any college counseling during high school

with only a single meeting with a college counselor at her local community college. Rezi describes her first appointment at the community college:

I went to talk to a counselor. ... And he's like, "OK, do you like working with things or do you like working with people?" [And I said,] "Well, I like working with people. I like being around people and I'm comfortable with people." [And he said,] "OK, do you like big people? Do you like little people?" [And I said,] "Well, I like kids. I like little kids." [And he said,] "OK, there's this two-year program in early childhood, go. ... And that's it.

Clearly, Rezi's description of her single college counseling session is an example of the lack of care and direction Latina prospective teachers may encounter as they enter college. Such one-shot counseling and advising sessions can have long-term negative effects on prospective Latina teachers. Rezi reports:

I took three or four sports [elective] classes ... at a certain point, I had to take more of the classes that I really needed [for my two-year degree]. ... I didn't have any mentors or anybody guiding me through, I ... guided myself. ... They [co-workers at her campus daycare job] kept saying, "The more education, the more money you'll make." So, I continued to go to school.

Rezi like others in the study, did not receive sufficient college counseling and advising; such counseling might have helped her to graduate on time with a two-year transfer degree, as well as to align her college and career goals. Several of the participants reported taking three or more years to complete a two-year degree. In addition, they were never informed of the long-term career implications of forgoing the opportunity to obtain a teaching license along with their

undergraduate degree programs, and reported becoming stuck as teaching assistants. Others reported working in low-paying child-care centers, or in language institutes that often did not provide employee benefits.

Alternatively, some participants found that their undergraduate degrees were less profitable than the certificates that their siblings had earned from two-year technical programs, which provided entry-level salaries comparable to mid-career teachers, more opportunity for professional growth, similar benefits, and the opportunity to give back to their communities. For some participants, the lack of appropriate college counseling and advising resulted in the difficult and expensive choice of returning to school to complete a teaching certificate after they had started families and had already accumulated large undergraduate financial aid debt.

Miriam reported that when a representative from the education department came to her Spanish class that she was taking for her minor studies, and asked who wanted to have a teaching certificate, she turned down this opportunity:

[I said] "Oh, I don't need that." I regret that now. I wish I had taken the certificate at that time. ... And now, I want to do it ... but it's going to take more time ... it's frustrating. [I] needed more guidance or mentors who could [have helped] ... [me determine] whether I [would be] good at [teaching].

While career decision-making is likely difficult for all college students, the findings from the present study confirm prior evidence (Martinez & Cervera, 2012) that Latinas disproportionately receive less contact with college representatives, that institutional marketing resources are less likely to influence their decisions to apply to colleges, and that they are more likely to take longer or fail to complete their degrees (Fry & Taylor, 2013). In addition, this

study's findings may help explain why other studies (Risco & Duffy, 2010) report Latina undergraduate students as being more indecisive in their career decisions. Taken together, the present study's findings all indicate poor access to quality comprehensive college counseling and advising can be a challenge to improving the number of Latina prospective teachers.

The cost of college. Comprehensive college counseling and advising also includes discussion of the admissions process and financial aid planning. All of the participants described the cost of college as having had a significant impact on their access to college and the teacher trajectory. They reported that their financial assistance for college included loans, grants, work-study, and scholarships. This aid covered the total cost of college attendance for the majority of the participants. Several of the women reported that merit-based minority student scholarships and affirmative action policies made it possible for them to attend college and pursue their goal of becoming a teacher. Without these need-and race-sensitive admissions and financial aid policies, Rezi reported that "your dreams can only go so far." For other participants, such as Rosa, being awarded a financial aid package covering the entire cost of her education completely determined where she would attend school.

In 8th grade [...] someone gave me an article from Reader's Digest [a popular magazine] about the military academies and how if you go into the military academy, the government pays for college. ... This [was] what I was going to do to go to college because I knew my parents couldn't pay for college. I want to be a doctor and I need my college paid for. I'd never even thought about being an officer in the military.

However, during her senior year Rosa was informed by a military representative that only 2% of her class [peers enlisting in the Air Force in the same year] would go to medical school. She said:

My whole plan was just shut. If I didn't go to med [medical] school, I didn't want to be an officer in the Air Force. I had no idea what my next steps were because I [had] been on this specific process for several years.

Although Rosa was accepted to several highly selective colleges; she explains that:

At Stanford, I would have had to take out \$9,000 in loans. At [the less selective college she attended], everything was paid for. There were no loans whatsoever. My parents were basically like, "Well, this is where you're going because this is what we can afford, zero." ... I was disappointed that I wasn't going to be able to go to Stanford.

For most middle-income families, \$9,000 is a drop in the bucket, and would never be a serious factor in deciding between a no-name school and a school like Stanford. Students from such families are not limited to learning about options for financing a college degree solely from Reader's Digest, and enlisting in the military would be a deeply felt personal choice, as opposed to a pragmatic sacrifice to obtain a college degree.

Sonia, who completed her undergraduate teacher education program at a private college in Oregon, reported that, despite receiving scholarships, the cost of her undergraduate program left her with years of repaying college loans, which later prohibited her from completing her master's degree in education. This advanced degree would have made a substantial difference in her potential teacher salary. Sonia described the sacrifices she and her family endured for her to complete her bachelor's degree at a private institution:

I worked as a dishwasher ... childcare provider ... playground assistant ... a resident assistant ... and every penny went straight to my college [expenses]. And then college ... it kept getting more expensive. ... I used to take the [college] van for the drive, just to get

off campus. I mean, I didn't have money. ... [My dorm mate] would always come from Portland with all these packages ... buying all of these clothes, and [carrying] a checkbook. I didn't even know what a checkbook was. ... My parents saved money and I was able to buy a car, almost \$300. It was an old Mustang that was found in a park, but I needed to get to my student teaching [assignment]. And they sent me some money so I could get a dress.

Rosa and Sonia's challenges present counter-arguments to proponents of race- and need-blind merit-based admissions policies that favor white and upper-class students and that increasingly exclude high achieving students of color and economically disadvantaged students; without some form of outside support, it is almost impossible to complete a four-year degree. In addition, all of the participants in this study who started college at a two-year institution with lower tuition rates required frequent breaks from college, which totaled as long as four years and thereby extended the time it took them to complete their bachelor's degrees. Only one participant earned her teaching credential at the master's level (which is more expensive and takes one or two years longer than earning a teaching credential at the bachelor's level), despite the fact that these master's level programs are increasingly becoming the primary pathways to teaching licenses in Oregon's public universities (Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, 2015).

These findings are important because college enrollment trends consistently indicate that students of color are more likely to enroll in college at less-expensive two-year institutions. While some studies find that community colleges offer a better social fit and higher second-year persistence rates for historically underserved students (Wells, 2008), the present study supports research (Professional Educator Standards Board, 2013; Balassone, 2013) that instead argues that

lower transfer and degree attainment rates at community colleges may not make these institutions the most suitable starting point for a teacher trajectory. In light of such participants' statements and supporting literature, the financial burden of persisting on the teacher trajectory appears to be a challenge to improving the number of Latina teachers, particularly when financial aid awards increasingly do not cover the cost of enrollment at a four-year university, and when graduate tuition rates are figured into career decision making.

Taken together, educational inequity issues that disproportionally impact Latinas' college readiness, career choice, and chances of college completion (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012) are likely barriers to recruiting prospective Latina teachers. These educational inequity issues need the urgent attention of educational policy makers and university–school–community teams that are concerned with teacher workforce diversity (Ulrich, 2011).

Personal wounding: Racial, linguistic, and cultural microaggressions. The perception of the majority of the participants in this study was that linguistically and culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy were lacking in their P–12 school experiences, and were motivations for them to become teachers. Unfortunately, the participants experienced these same voids as persisting in their college experiences, as well as presenting challenges to their teacher trajectory. This study found that, in college, the participants experienced accent discrimination, racial stereotypes and discrimination, and a lack of culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy; all of these experiences were inconsistent with the women's prior expectations regarding college and teaching as transformative learning trajectories. At first, these experiences of stereotyping and discrimination may be unsurprising, given the historical legacy of racism and segregation in the US; however, in light of highly publicized claims by teacher education programs that teaching is now concerned with social justice, equity, and excellence (Chalkboard Project, 2012) the

participants' continuing experiences of marginalization were devastating for the women in the study who held high aspirations for the transformative potential of a college degree and a teaching career.

Sonia, who was told by her supervising master teacher that she would "never get a [teaching] job because of [her] accent," also experienced stereotypical comments from the students at the site where she was placed for field experience teaching during her sophomore year in college. Sonia said:

I was teaching PE in first grade ... these kids ... were very well-to-do to say the least, and they were always traveling all over the world. Their parents were highly influential people. ... And this little girl comes to me and she pulls me [over and she said], "Can you come to my house?" [And I said], "Why?" And she said, "Because I want you to talk to my Chihuahua. [My] dog speaks Spanish."

It could be easy to dismiss the master teacher's comments regarding Sonia's accent as misinformed, or as an isolated incidence of racism, and to write off this student's request as a child's innocent naïveté. However, the participants' *testimonios* revealed daily, systematic encounters of similar racial, linguistic, and cultural microaggressions throughout their college experiences, which included being marginalized by color-, class-, and culture-blind teaching and pedagogy. These experiences clearly sent the message that teaching was for Eurocentric, white, middle-class women. For example, the overwhelming majority of the participants described there being few, if any, teacher education courses that specifically addressed teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students. Further, the women consistently described having only "one course" (Maya), or "[no] courses" (Lola) that addressed equity issues or that were engaged in

anti-racist initiatives aimed at creating welcoming and inclusive teaching and learning environments.

Lola described the student population of the elementary school in Oregon where she was assigned as a student teacher as being highly diverse: "Half of the kids were [Latino and English-language learners], and the rest were divided between Asian, African-American, and Anglo kids." Lola also reported that all of "the teachers [at the school were] Anglo," including an ELL teacher who worked with a lot of the students. Lola went on to report that, "No, [the ELL teacher was not a bilingual Spanish speaker]; she kind of picked stuff up over the years but I don't think she had any [Spanish] training." Contrary to what this researcher expected, Lola added, "I don't remember talking to the kids [at my school] in Spanish, and I don't know why." Lola reported that she was never encouraged to use her cultural knowledge or bilingual skills in her field experiences. Overall, the participants' descriptions illustrated a systemic neglect and undervaluation of linguistic and cultural knowledge, inconsistent with the strong body of evidence reporting that teachers of color are uniquely positioned to teach students of color (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Villegas et al, 2012).

The overwhelming majority of the participants reported experiencing racial microaggressions (Yosso et al., 2009) on their college campuses, in their teacher education programs, and within the communities where they were assigned as student teachers. Kohli & Solórzano (2012) assert that these "subtle daily insults that, as a form of racism, support a racial and cultural hierarchy of minority inferiority" (p. 3) have long-term implications in deeply wounding students of color, which can over time be internalized as self-doubt, invisibility, and feelings of being unwelcome. Perceptions of hostility in college classrooms and within campus environments have been found to negatively impact student persistence and success (Ware,

2012) and Ware (2012), points out that “the unwelcoming climate undermines some students’ efficacy perceptions, serving ultimately to reproduce expectations that ethnic minority students are not capable and therefore not entitled to participate” (p. 53).

Despite these challenges, the study participants provided experiences that constitute counternarratives to the dominant one and that center on their knowledge, skills, and abilities, challenging deficit perspectives of Latinas. These positive counternarratives also illustrated the participants’ strong commitment to educational reform and to improving all students’ experiences. For example, Sonia utilized navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to persist through institutional barriers that may have prevented her from staying “active” (Sonia) or engaged in her college and greater community. As a junior in college she received an academic accomplishment award, and in her senior year she received the prestigious Joan of Arc award for scholarship, character, and promoting social justice. Sonia said:

Some of my classmates, they didn’t like me because [I received the awards]. ... [Sonia goes on to say how she resisted this peer pressure]. I [gave one of the] speeches at [my] graduation [ceremony]. ... I talked about prejudice. How we as kids, we were always fine, and yes, there might have been some prejudice, but our families, our parents’ [generation] ... especially those who, like my family, had come from Mexico [experienced] this [debilitating] prejudice that they talked [about].

The marginalizing conditions that these women encountered in college were experienced at the intersections of race, class, language, culture, ethnicity, immigration history, and geography. The unwelcome or hostile campus environments described by the participants are representative of conditions and characteristics that are likely to push out perspective Latina

teachers from the teacher trajectory (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Irizarry's (2012) ethnographic study of Latin@ pre-service teachers posits that, despite the extraordinary resiliency and resistance displayed by the Latin@ pre-service teachers in his study, these types of negative forces are likely to reduce the number of Latin@ teachers.

Personal healing: Allies and affirming cultural resources. Despite personal challenges stemming from educational inequity and racist microaggressions, the women in this study described personal healing in college as coming from allies, and from opportunities to affirm their cultural resources as assets. These healing experiences contributed to their persistence in college and the teacher trajectory. These positive forces were also reported as motivations for their commitment to serve their communities as teachers.

Allies such as faculty mentors, P–12 school administrators, community leaders, and workplace supervisors provided supportive relationships, encouragement, and access to strategic networks. These individuals played important role in the participants' resistance to systematic inequities by providing licensure guidance and opportunities for engagement with the internal and external college community. These individuals also opened avenues for the participants to affirm their cultural resources as assets.

For example, Maya's Spanish professor helped her find a student teaching assignment that would allow Maya to teach Elementary Education and Spanish—a placement that was difficult to arrange in a primarily white university town. Maya met her Spanish professor once a week at a charter school to team-teach a Spanish class, and when Maya learned that she would need to complete a student teaching assignment in a Spanish-dominant country for her to add a Spanish language teaching licensure to her Elementary Education certification her professor offered her support. Maya said:

I didn't find out [about the student teaching requirement in a Spanish-dominant country] until I [had completed most of] my coursework for [my Spanish minor]. ... [Maya questioned her ability to progress with the program]. [She said], "How am I supposed to teach abroad when I have a six year old and my husband is working?" [She went on to report]... [My professor] helped arrange it so that my son and I went [to Mexico] together ... and we stayed together with a host family and [completed] the experience ... together, because that was the situation I was in. [My professor made] sure that it was arranged and that it would work out, so that I would be able to get my licensure. That was very helpful and supportive, as well. We spent the summer in Mexico and I taught and [my son] went ... to school at the school [where] I was teaching.

Maya goes on to talk about the role of supportive relationships in her career path in general:

Having one or two people that encourage you and help you along the way really makes the difference. In college, I had a couple of professors who were really excited about [Spanish] language and language development and I got this urgency about [teaching] this population of students.

Maya was encouraged to enter a master's program in teaching English as a Second Language shortly after completing her undergraduate teacher education program. She said:

There were some places in town that [had large] Asian population[s]. ... but I was really specific on wanting to [complete my student teaching] somewhere there were [Latin@] students, and I'd always heard about this town that had a [large number] of ESL students. ... [It] was about 45 minutes away [from campus and] had a meat packing plant. ... So

they [the program coordinators] let me go. ... I used ... my Spanish there and I ... felt that urgency of being a teacher and ... being a [Latin@] ... and going to help ... Mexican students who may not be getting [appropriate] help.

Recent research argues that including and engaging pre-service teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in faculty-led research and strategic relationships with the external community requires the commitment of “social–justice minded faculty” (Ware, 2012 p. 54). Such purposeful engagement benefits students of color by providing opportunities to develop social networks, confirm their achievements (Ware, 2012), and affirm their cultural knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2006), all of which are likely to improve persistence and contribute to educational success.

Michelle completed her teaching license through a grow-your-own [a local college prepared local prospective teachers for local schools] teacher education program which recruited candidates interested in improving schools and communities with high numbers of English learners. She benefited from the opportunity to affirm her cultural resources, which had been marginalized during in her P–12 school years:

Because I’m Native American and Mexican, I wanted to get different teaching experiences. I taught English as a second language ... in Santa Ana, which [has] a high Mexican immigrant population, [and I taught] on the Reservation that was in San Diego. ... It really means the world to me because it feels like I’m able to give a part of me that didn’t call for attention or try to get recognized in school.

The participants' *testimonios* illustrate how contextualizing learning, in conjunction with a supportive practicing faculty, may benefit Latina pre-service teachers at a deeper level of personal healing. This appears to contribute to persistence by meeting Latina teachers' goals for giving back to their communities. This study supports research (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012) that suggests that teachers of color are more likely than their Anglo peers to teach and persist in under-performing schools with larger percentages of students of color and students from lower-socioeconomic strata; these teachers of color often desire to return to schools similar to those they had attended in order to promote equity (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). The present study also agrees with the findings of other studies, which found that Latinas place a higher value on careers with social interest (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Martinez & Cervera, 2012). For the women in this study, opportunities to center their knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as the support of allies, all provided personal healing experiences that contributed to their motivation to teach, helped them persist in the teacher trajectory, and ultimately led to giving back to their communities.

On being and persistence: *La maestra* | the teacher. The perception of the participants in this study was that educational inequities, personal wounding, and personal healing remained crucial forces in their teacher trajectories. Experiencing these ongoing forces may explain why they reported the same factors of *personal and social transformation, the potential to make systematic changes, and the importance of giving back* as influencing their decision to enter and persist in their journeys to become teachers, as well as to remain in the teacher workforce. In the women's primary school, secondary school, and college experiences, these negative and positive forces influenced their academic success and career choice. As practicing educators, the women reported that these forces influenced their persistence in the teacher workforce, instilling an

ongoing commitment to critical and liberating dialogue with students and families, and encouraging them to take action to end the perpetuation of historical injustices. Finding teaching environments where they felt that “they belonged” (Sonia) and where they perceived that they were making a difference for students and families also kept them teaching. The overwhelming majority of the women in this study further reported that they returned to college more than once to earn additional degrees, licenses, and endorsements, as well as to improve their bilingual skills; they undertook these actions to support their chances for persistence in the educator workforce despite the personal sacrifices required. Remaining teachers was likely perceived as an act of transformational resistance (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) to the women in this study, and as an act that held the potential for closing the opportunity gap, creating equity and inclusion, and promoting social justice.

Educational Inequity: Teaching to close the opportunity gap. All of the women in the study reported that many of their Latin@ students had been negatively impacted by socioeconomic, sociopolitical, and sociocultural factors that were similar to those that the participants had themselves experienced as P–12 students. For example, the participants described how poverty, anti-immigrant policies, and a lack of bilingual education unfairly marginalize culturally and linguistically diverse students in majority-culture schools. The women’s perceptions were that, as practicing educators with lived realities relevant to those of their students (especially Latin@ ones), they had gained a sufficient level of self-efficacy to engage in critical dialogic praxis with multiple school stakeholders. A teaching position elevated their potential to challenge the structures that contributed to educational inequities, and commitment to their students significantly influenced participant persistence.

Moreover, by working to close the opportunity gaps for their students, the women in this study were recognized by their allies for their unique perspectives, cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. Through critical self-reflection, dialogue, and action (Freire, 1970) teaching was made personally and socially transformative. However, these women did not always receive support from their entire school district. For example, Sonia, like other participants, described working to reduce structural barriers that negatively impacted her students' success. Sonia described starting programs that offered early-childhood home visits and after-school literacy enrichment. She also worked to engage families in productive home-school partnerships. These efforts to address students' needs incorporated engaging families in dialogue, with the explicit goal of passing on resistance strategies for challenging oppressive structures within the majority-culture school system, as well as engaging families in discussions about college and career goals. Sonia recognized that closing opportunity gaps for each and every student required a personalized approach based on building authentic partnerships with her students and their families, engaging community organizations, and resisting monoculture and monolingual structures:

I was just going to be there [her first teaching position] for three years and then move on. And then, one year turned into another year and I was there 16 [years] because I knew I belonged. ... I didn't [move schools so] I had been able to be there for the [Latin@] families ... and really work with them.

Sonia goes on to describe how her resistance and persistence began to attract the attention of education leaders:

[A friend who worked at another school inquired] "Did you know that your name is being brought up in the school board meeting [at a nearby school district]?" I said I didn't know

[that] ... And then I got contacted by ... [another local] school district ... saying, "We want you, what can we do to get you to come and teach for us? They asked [for] my advice ... Here [I am], people are asking [for] my advice, that's amazing!

Sonia's experience is representative of how the women in this study used their cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities to address their students' opportunity gaps. These efforts to resist structural barriers led to achieving positive outcomes for their students and contributed to the study participants' persistence in the teacher workforce. Similar efforts, such as Glemer designing Spanish courses for native speakers, and Rosa starting a "First Timers Club" for first-generation college students, appear to affirm that the participants felt they belonged in their schools because they perceived that they were making a difference in the lives of their students, as well as in their students' families and communities. However, participants did not necessarily feel valued throughout the entire school district or community. When Sonia decided to leave her long-time teaching position, teachers from a nearby school, who deeply believed that Sonia would be a valuable asset to their students, had encouraged her as to her worth and employability. However, when she went to apply for the position she was not met with the same enthusiasm. Sonia said, "I [went] to [see] the HR [Human Resources administrator] ... the first thing he said as I entered his office was 'Oh, I thought that you were a Scandinavian.'" At this point in Sonia's teacher trajectory she had experienced discrimination from school officials based on her race, ethnicity, class, gender, and Spanish accent. Sonia was ultimately offered the job but was hired as someone who was explicitly other, not as someone who was first and foremost a skillful and effective teacher.

Like Sonia, Glemer's teaching peers outside of her Spanish and ELL departments never acknowledged her efforts to reduce structural barriers for Latin@ students; after six years Glemer realized that the racialized school culture had not improved. However, Glemer's success teaching and mentoring culturally and linguistically diverse students won her recognition throughout the region, and she was soon recruited from her rural school to a nearby urban school where the "culture [was] different" and she would have a better job "opportunity":

I'm really proud ... of this team of teachers and administrators we have. ... They talk to the [students] a lot. "You are capable, you belong here, this is your school, you're going to be good, we're going to help you. You need to help yourself, tell me how we can help. If you have problems at home, we can deal with it, we can give you support, we can give you food, whatever you need, but you need to also work for yourself and try to be good and be here. There [is] a lot of work with ... families, as well. They belong to the school, they are our neighbors, [they] are good, too.

Rosa offered a third example of overcoming and challenging deep-seated negative beliefs and racism, staying focused on her goals of improving the college-going and-college-completion rates of first-generation students, despite working in a community sometimes challenged with "[racism] aimed at [Latin@] culture." Rosa also experienced discouraging comments from some Latin@ parents and students, who had internalized the racist and classist assumption that college was not for them:

They [families] have a lot of concerns because they're not familiar with the process, but have heard a lot of stories about, you know, "My daughter went away [to college] and got pregnant," or "My daughter went to college and didn't finish, and now, we have [huge

debt].”... Or the student may say, “Why would I need an education because my dad didn’t go to college” ... or some of our students are undocumented. ... Well, whatever their concerns are, we are trying to address [them] and give them as much information ... opportunity, and support ... as possible. ... [In some cases] It has been really hard to ... [convey] this is a different world. The expectations and requirements are different.

By making the decision to remain in the education profession, this study’s participants were able to work for personal transformation and social improvement by utilizing resistance and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005). As Freire (1970) argued:

The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [or herself] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. [Teachers and students] become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. ... Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. (p. 80)

The present study supports research that suggests that Latin@ teacher persistence as a response to structural oppression is related to transformational resistance (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Solozano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). In addition, this study’s findings suggest that, faced with employment challenges, Latina teachers may be more likely to take action than to leave the education profession—in the present study, Latina teachers changed schools, changed education positions, or earned additional credentials to obtain jobs or to improve their jobs. Despite the obvious prevailing need for additional Latina teachers and bilingual educators, this finding may explain an otherwise puzzling discrepancy between the number of licensed and working educators of color:

Data tracked by TSPC [Oregon Teachers Standards and Practices Commission] show that in 2011–2012, a considerable number of educators of color (>1000) were holding current TSPC educator licenses but not currently employed as educators in an Oregon public school. Except for those self-reporting as [Latin@], the disaggregated percentages of educators self-identifying as African American, Asians, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Multi-Ethnic were all higher than the percentage of educators self-reporting as White who met the same criteria. (Oregon Department of Education, Retention Grant, 2013, p. 2)

In addition, this finding from the present study defies assumptions that Latin@ teachers tend to be more passive and accepting of unemployment or unsatisfactory employment, and instead reflects how schools perpetuate occupational segregation. Sonia gives credence to this perspective:

The staff thinks that you should not be in teaching. I kind of looked at her [a school administrator] and I said, “Why?” And she said, “They said you work too hard and that you’ll never find a man to marry, because you work so hard.” That was a very hard thing for me to handle because I had worked so hard to get my education and to become a teacher and I kind of looked at her and I said, “You know, my parents worked hard, they worked hard in factories.” I said, “I only know how to work hard.” And I said, “I’m not concerned about finding a husband.”... [It] was devastating [to hear] that the staff felt that I should not be in teaching because I worked too hard.

From a CRT and LatCrit perspective, these women's persistence in the face of experiencing various forms of structural oppression challenges the dominant ideology of equal opportunity and the argument that the underrepresentation of Latina teachers is due to their deficits. In addition, CRT and LatCrit can be used to understand how multiple forms of oppression marginalize Latina teachers and impact persistence. Yosso (2005) reasons that "a theory based on one form of inequity cannot sufficiently address racism as it intersects with multiple forms of subordination and shapes the lives of People of Color in U.S. Society" (p.13).

The findings from the present study suggest that these women's persistence in the teacher workforce was influenced by their commitment to closing opportunity gaps for their students and promoting educational equity. To achieve this goal, they reported overcoming ongoing structural barriers to remain teachers. In the next section on personal wounding, this researcher will describe how the present study suggests that systematic racism, the undervaluing of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and pedagogy, and hostile school cultures negatively impact Latin@ teacher retention.

Personal Wounding: Teaching for equity and inclusion. The women in this study described being exposed to ongoing institutional racism; monocultural and monolingual policies and practices; and negative school cultures, both subtle and explicit, in the schools where they were employed. These wounding forces were often also directed at other Latin@ students and families. Negative comments by staff, biased assumptions of Latin@ students academic abilities, and language- and culture-blind pedagogy and practices were reported to have mirrored the majority of the participants' educational experiences. Despite expressing frustration over systematic marginalization, the women in this study remained resilient in their efforts to create equitable and inclusive leaning environments. Their choice to work within the system that

unfairly oppressed so many culturally and linguistically diverse students highlighted their commitment to changing the system that had personally wounded them, as well.

Institutional racism. The women's sometimes painfully spoken *testimonios* described navigating teaching experiences that situated them as token teachers of color or as unofficial (and uncompensated) school interpreters. One participant, Lola, even reported being denied interpreters when conferencing with Spanish speaking Latin@ parents. However, despite these painful experiences, the participants in this study remained steadfastly focused on improving the experiences and outcomes of their students. For Lola, this commitment meant reminding herself that "speaking Spanish was not bad" and that "speaking Spanish to her Mexican students" had positive outcomes. She gained the respect of her school principle, who grew to understand that calling Lola out of class to interpret was unfair to Lola and her students. Lola felt comfortable working with instructional coaches but found that "making the curriculum [hers]" was her way of addressing students' individual needs and promoting equity and inclusion. For all of the participants, utilizing navigational and linguistic capital within their workplace influenced their persistence.

Rezi—who had been wounded by early academic tracking and ostracized for not speaking in class as an emerging bilingual student—found that, as a teacher, her bilingual and bicultural skills were finally an asset. Rezi explained: "I set up a program for [Spanish] ... and the parents really liked it. Once I started using [my bilingual skills], that became a primary part of what I did with my teaching. That's what everybody wanted me to do." Garcia (2001) describes two confusing contradictions: "Spanish is not good when you are young, but it is good when you are an adult; your native Spanish is not good, but those of nonnative speakers who are less communicative than you is good" (p. 56). Navigating systematic injustices and confirming

their bicultural and bilingual skills as assets helped to affirm the study participants' place in the teacher workforce.

Culturally responsive teaching. The participants' culturally responsive teaching practices supported student achievement and engagement, as well the improvement of the schools they worked in. As Mirriam so clearly illustrates, even small improvements justified these women's commitment to teaching:

I love to do this. I love teaching, especially since you get to help kids learn and you can see they're learning. It feels good just to know that. ... [She goes on to describe her efforts to provide an inclusive bilingual classroom]. The difference is it [her classroom] is like your house. It's like they're in Mexico. [I may say] "Let's go and have a snack." They come to the kitchen [and] I am still speaking the [Spanish] language. [If] they want something, they [have] to ask in Spanish. I teach them the culture. They get to cook ... They make their own tortilla and then squish the tortilla themselves. [The] kids love that. ... I mean you have [the] syllabus in Spanish, you learn how to read the syllabus, you will learn how to read an English syllabus. Do addition in Spanish the same way you're going to learn addition in English. So I'm helping [students] do it better, doing it this way.

Gay (2010) contends that the goal of culturally responsive teaching is to make learning more appropriate and effective for diverse students. This culturally responsive approach to teaching bridges in-school experiences with out-of-school contexts; highlights the salience of trusting and respectful relationships; builds multicultural and multilingual communities; and develops "students' sense of agency, efficacy, and empowerment" (Oregon Department of Education, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practices Grant, 2014, p. 2). Combined with

culturally relevant pedagogy, the expected outcomes are improved academic achievement and higher retention and graduation rates for culturally and linguistically diverse students; such an approach to teaching also develops critical consciousness in both teachers and students (Oregon Department of Education, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practices Grant, 2014). The majority of the participants in this study said that utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices and pedagogy had a positive impact on their persistence. Rezi said, "I could stay [at her school job] for a while. ... They [the school] had room for individual [student] needs." However, when her family moved to Oregon she started a new teaching job, in which she was unable to utilize a culturally responsive teaching approach and pedagogy. Rezi perceived that staying in her teaching position would mean contributing to the perpetuation of systematic marginalization. Rezi said, "I was so disillusioned. ... They [the school] had [a few small] classrooms where [students worked individually on identical projects with no application to the students' lives]. It was so disheartening for me. I didn't stick with that for long."

The participants reported that their choice to leave or persist was not always completely in their hands. Norma describes being asked to leave her teaching position due, in part, to her insufficient Spanish fluency—the native language that she had been discouraged from speaking as a child. Her culturally responsive teaching approach and pedagogy were also not aligned with the school's curriculum, and this caused her professional capacity to be challenged:

I had 28 kindergarteners, and half of them were Spanish speaking and half of them were English speaking. ... They [school administrators of her bilingual/dual language program] said this [her classroom] [needs to be] an exact replica of what's going on next door in the English kindergarten, that everything is going to be the same, except for the language. And there was just something in my gut that was saying, "Really?" [For example, to

include curricula relevant to her students' histories,] I was recruiting [Latin@] families to come in ... and [share their experiences]. ... But I was told that that's not part of the curriculum. ... [And] there was some testing that went on that I didn't agree with. ... So it's like they didn't want me [as a classroom teacher], but they rehired me for ESL.

When culturally responsive teaching practices and pedagogy were not encouraged in the participants' schools and there was little academic autonomy, the women's persistence was clearly compromised. In light of this finding, the present study suggests that promoting culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy supports Latina teacher persistence. In addition, Ingersoll & May (2012), suggest that a decrease in "individual teacher classroom autonomy, especially in regards to the selection of texts, content, topics and evaluating of students in their courses [is] one of the organizational conditions strongly associated with minority teacher turnover" (p. 45).

As Latina teachers reflect on their own histories, they may see culturally responsive teaching as praxis that supports equity and inclusion. However, the findings from the present study suggest that culturally responsive teaching, cultural competency, and the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy was not a priority for the school districts in which this study's participants worked. For example, the participants reported that educational leaders who had the power to position and support training in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model—a model which prioritizes improving English learners' academic success—did not attend trainings or provide follow-up for this professional development. This lack of accountability and evaluation was described as reducing the training from a powerful tool to something that was "just there" (Glemer).

Clearly the present study supports research suggesting that “school organization, management, and leadership matters” (Ingersoll & May, 2011, p. 45) in retaining teachers of color. Both CRT and LatCrit inform the perspective that policies such as English immersion devalue English learners and send the message that Latin@s, including Latina teachers (regardless of whether or not they speak Spanish) are other, deficient, and less than—or even a problem (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). By promoting such otherizing policies and excluding family histories and knowledge (Rodriguez, 2013), schools play a role in perpetuating racialized systematic injustices. This not only impacts their culturally and linguistically diverse students, but disenfranchises teachers, as well (Davila & Aviles de Bradley, 2010; Marcano, 2004; Ochoa, 2007).

The present study supports the perspective that culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy, along with cultural competency training, may contribute to the retention of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers, specifically Latin@s. However, other research suggests that, as a response to addressing educational equity and inclusion, cultural competency and professional development may fall short (Curry-Stevens, 2014; Curry-Stevens & Reyes, 2014). A statement made by the Coalition of Communities of Color & Portland State University (2013) highlights this concern:

A significant critique is emerging about the capacity of “cultural competency” to address racial disparities. The basis of this critique is that it idealizes the ability of mainstream service providers to work outside their own cultural context and provide services to communities of color. As a response to racial disparities, cultural competency fails to generate the comprehensive reforms needed to promote racial equity. So too this

“movement” fails to legitimate the urgent needs of communities of color and the requisite funding of culturally specific organizations (p. 108).

School Culture. This study's findings suggest that a positive, student-centered school culture that promotes high achievement for each and every student supports Latina teacher retention, as Glemer excitedly described:

When I say “culture” it's the students' culture: they care about the school, they care about teachers, they care about their own education ... and I think that is great. ... [Latin@ students] asked for support, the counselors were helping. ... And I was, “Okay, I'm in a different school.” That was awesome!

In contrast, Glemer's *testimonio* moved to a troubling tone when she reported the impact that systematic racism had on her former teaching site: “We had a [Latin@] club ... we had a [Latin@] liaison, ... we had a [Latino] principal, but [the school culture] didn't work.”

Supporting Glemer's experience, Garcia (2001) writes that, in majority-culture schools in the US, “English-speaking children share the negative stereotypes of their parents and of society at large” (p. 72). To support a positive school culture that enables Latina teachers to contribute to creating equitable and inclusive schools, and to boost Latina teacher retention, school leadership must take steps to improve cultural awareness, as well as awareness of personal, interpersonal, and institutional racism in schools and communities.

In the following section on supports for Latin@ teacher retention, this researcher will describe how social networks and *familia* contributed to the participants' development of a

professional educator identity that affirmed their place in the teacher workforce and opened a counter-space for personal healing.

Personal healing: Braiding and (re)braiding a professional educator identity

<i>Y tú ¿quién eres?</i>	And you, who are you?
<i>¿De dónde vienes?</i>	Where do you come from?
I have not given you permission to exist.	I have not given you permission to exist.
<i>Soy quien soy</i>	I am who I am
<i>Soy de aquí</i>	I am from here
<i>Y soy porque</i>	and I am because
<i>Yo digo</i>	I say so
<i>Es todo.</i>	That's all.

Hernández-Avila, Inés (2001, p. 244)

[bold type added for emphasis]

The participants in this study reported experiencing personal healing, *sobrevivencia* (survival and beyond; Villenas, 2006, p. 144), and a sense of wholeness (Villenas, 2006) as they developed their professional educator identity. Braiding and “(re)braiding” their individual, ethnic, and cultural identities with their lived experiences as primarily rural educators informed who they perceived themselves to be, the context from which they taught, and why they persisted as educators in rural Oregon schools. The women’s *testimonios* highlighted the importance of utilizing social and familial capital to construct their professional identity and fuel their resiliency as educators.

Social networks. Though research suggests that formal induction and mentoring programs for new teachers (i.e., those with 1–3 years of teaching) promotes retention (New Teacher Center, n.d.), the women in this study, who are all veteran teachers, had not experienced these formal teaching supports during their early career years. Instead, this study's participants described benefiting from informal support from colleagues, school administrators, and community members who held similar equity-, social justice-, and student-centered ideologies. These networks helped the women in the present study to develop their teaching practices and navigate majority-culture school systems, and aided them in maintaining a collective commitment to improving the experiences and outcomes for students, including Latin@ students. What appeared to make these informal social supports important to the participants' persistence as educators was reciprocal respect, inclusion in decision making, and the exchange of insider and outsider resources and experiences, which provided emotional, pedagogical, and professional affirmation. Though the majority of the participants benefited from collaborating and networking with Latina teachers and bilingual educators (see Weisman, Flores, & Valenciana, 2007), these opportunities were limited and several participants were the only Latin@s in their schools. Therefore, the participants' networks and the supports they received from individuals grew beyond teachers from the same social group. The participants' networks developed through alliances based on similar teaching ideologies and among individuals with an orientation toward equity and a commitment to serving students and families. These factors made a positive impacted on the participants' persistence in the teaching profession.

Glemer, a high school Spanish teacher who had also taught ELL classes, received valuable emotional and professional support from a bilingual ELL administrator. A friend of Glemer's who was working in the education field introduced Glemer to the ELL administrator.

This connection with the ELL administrator helped Glemer to expand her professional opportunities and to spearhead the formation of a community of practice (Wenger, 2000) among her teaching peers. These relationships fostered reciprocal respect among colleagues and enhanced Glemer's connection to her school and students. Glemer explained:

The middle school, high school team teachers [both Anglo teachers] [and] myself ... built the [ELL] curriculum. We did everything from ground zero to a high performance and ... a good curriculum for ELL [students], but it took us time. It took us a lot of effort ... to give the best and prepare the [students]. One of the teachers, she is a curriculum expert and an ELL teacher, so she was awesome. I have my own experience [as a native Spanish speaking Latina, and teaching and mentoring] Latinos and I helped a lot and also [with] the curriculum in grammar, especially grammar [holding a master's degree in Linguistics], and although the teachers [did not work together on a daily basis], we were an awesome team.

Wenger (2000) asserts that the benefits of communities of practice include individual help with challenges, access to expertise, confidence, meaningful work, and personal development, as well as improved reputation, professional identity, networking, and marketability. In addition to supporting individuals, institutions benefit from the sharing of social capital for problem solving, time saving, knowledge sharing, synergy across units, resource sharing, keeping abreast of industry and organizational changes, innovation, retention of talents, and exposure to new strategies (Wenger, 2000). In this way, social networks appear to affirm professional identity and persistence. Furthermore, the present study supports past findings that teachers' performance and commitment to their schools improves when working with

experienced peers, or with those who share similar teaching ideologies (Bouck, 2012). From a CRT and LaCrit analytical perspective, it is possible that positive social networks promote inclusion and dispel deficit perspectives of Latin@s' professional capacity, as well as disrupting tokenized diversity positions for teachers of color (Ochoa, 2007). This study's findings argue for ending the historical marginalization that places teachers of color in isolation in majority-culture schools and in the position of unfairly having to prove their professional status by adopting White Eurocentric teaching ideologies or, as Freire, (1970) cautioned against, by taking on the role of the oppressor. The data in the present study suggest that social networks that offer supports and that value multicultural and multilingual educators' professional perspectives appear to reduce Latina teachers' isolation and encourage persistence. In addition, the findings in this study suggest that supportive social networks promote persistence by reducing the negative impacts of institutional racism and providing Latina teachers with avenues to give back to students, families, and communities. In this way, social networks impact personal healing, a sense of survival, and wholeness, all of which support Latina teachers' decisions to remain in the teacher workforce.

In addition to formal social networks such as communities of practice, informal supports also play important roles. Maya provided an example of how peers and administrators played an important role in her social networks. These allies contributed to her access to mentors, as well as to feeling valued and supported in her school:

This is my 8th year ... in this [school]. There's another teacher who is also Latina. She and I are really good friends. She's on [her] 30th year of teaching. She actually has taught here [at Maya's school] all these years. ... She is a very successful teacher and the [students] learn when they are with her and they rise to her expectations.

In addition to peer support, Maya goes on to speak about her supportive relationship with her administrator:

I am still using the same curriculum that I started with eight years ago; however, other elementary schools are not. We were asked to change to a different curriculum and I said I really didn't feel like it would be the best switch for our group and my principal supported me in that decision and we weren't told we had to [change]. ... Our test scores had been fine. We weren't falling behind.

This study supports prior research (Ingersoll & May, 2011) that asserts that collaborative decision-making processes between faculty and administrators are an important factor impacting the retention of teachers of color. Furthermore, the present study's findings suggest that social networks that include supportive colleagues and school administrators promote collaborative decision-making processes in schools systems, strengthen professional educator identity, and impact Latina teacher retention. Norma describes a third example of how social networks that include community organizations also shape professional educator identity and influence persistence. Norma explained:

I am tied into the Latino community [in her city]. So my goal is to be able to bring [students who are isolated in rural communities with limited social networks] to events of the Latino Association. I think [they would benefit] from being around people that speak Spanish and share the culture. ... They're [the students] very, very isolated. So in some ways, it's more challenging for those students because at least in a school where there's quite a few [Spanish speaking students], they have that support, the peer support, the families might know each other. [These Latin@ students at her rural school] really don't

have a lot of support. So they [her supervisor and instructional coach] see the possibilities. They see the potential of having someone like me sort of raise awareness.

Norma also described a sense of healing when she utilized the social capital she gained from her social networks to help her navigate through the “institutional barriers” and the “isolation” she often felt when trying to give back to her community. The importance of giving back to her community was reported in the findings as a major factor that impacted her decision to enter a teaching career:

My supervisor was able to cut through some of [the bureaucracy]. She [supported] my ideas [of not] moving ELL teachers around [to different schools]. Well, [my reasons were] that doesn't help the students. Whereas if I stay in my position for a few years, I feel like my impact can be much greater if I really can establish relationships with those families.

Norma, like Glemer and Maya, provided a representative example of how strong social networks support Latina teachers' personal healing from past inequities, survival in the teacher trajectory, and cultivation of a sense of wholeness; such networks support Latina educators in building their professional educator identity and giving back to their communities. From this counter-space of hope and healing, the participants described their resiliency, remaining in the teaching profession despite experiencing ongoing challenges in majority-culture schools. The data from the present study suggest that school leaders who are committed to equity can impact Latina teacher retention by providing opportunities for Latina teachers to build their social networks through participating in communities of practice, including Latina teachers in shared

decision-making processes (Ingersoll & May, 2011), and encouraging Latina teachers in their outreach and efforts to build school–family–community relationships.

Familia. Using Yosso's (2005) conception of familial capital, a form of cultural wealth, the present study's findings also highlight how the funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) and cultural knowledge Latina teachers have gained from family and their cultural backgrounds contribute to the development of their ethnic identity. The participants described braiding their ethnic identity into their professional identity as a way of giving back to their students and communities, both of which are often misunderstood or marginalized in majority-culture schools. By drawing on the lessons shared and nurtured through their extended families—including immediate family, ancestors, fellow teachers, school staff, community members, and other close contacts that they considered family—the participants utilized coping strategies to reduce feelings of alienation within majority-culture schools. These strategies included enacting pedagogies of caring and providing *educación* that centered on their commitment to every student and to community well-being. In addition, by remaining in the teacher workforce, the participants described a sense of personal healing that came from disrupting deficit thinking about Latin@ family and individual characteristics and expressed their feeling of fulfilling a duty to model strong academic and professional achievement. By modeling positive engagement with Latin@ students and families, the women in this study called into question myths based on assumptions that students of color are to blame for their academic inequities, and that encourage negative perceptions of Latin@ families.

The present study suggests that, just as student retention is everyone's business—universities, schools, families, and communities (Farrell, 2009; Koenig, 2010; Killen, Rutland, & Ruck, 2011)—Latina teacher retention is everyone's business. This applies to the entire teacher

trajectory, not just assigned in-service mentors or induction programs. The participants described their commitment to their students and schools as a way to stay connected to their community and its resources. Yosso (2005) explains that, “Our kin also model lessons of caring, coping, and providing *educación*, which inform our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness” (p. 79). Remaining in the teacher profession strengthened these women’s communal bonds as they developed mutually beneficial relationships.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this *testimonio* study was to make a space for the stories of Latina teachers' trajectories into the teaching profession. By privileging the voices of Latina teachers, a call is made to build solidarity for social change and social justice, with the goal of improving the attraction, preparation, recruitment, and retention of Latina teachers in Oregon rural schools with growing Latin@ student populations. This researcher encourages those who read these women's stories and counterstories to draw their own conclusions and to form recommendations for change that apply to their own communities. The following conclusions from this study emerged from the research questions and findings, and address (a) the links between educational experiences, the power of education, and becoming a teacher, and (b) the links between the important roles that Latina teachers play in schools and their recruitment, preparation, and retention. The following is a discussion of the major findings and conclusions of the present study. Recommendations are offered for university–school–community partnerships, education policy, the field of adult learning, and for further research. Finally, this researcher provides a closing reflection on the present study.

Conclusions

Educational experiences, the power of education, and becoming a teacher. The first major finding from the present study is that all of the participants described socioeconomic status, language and culture, racial and ethnic microaggressions, and allies as having a profound impact on their educational experiences. The second major findings was that all of the participants indicated that they entered and persisted as teachers with hopes for social and personal transformation, and to make a positive contribution to their communities. Taken together, a conclusion to be drawn from these findings is that Latina students have fewer

opportunities to actualize the transformative power of education necessary to progress through the teacher trajectory when their cultural and linguistic resources, as well as and their cultural identities, are marginalized in US society, and reflected as deficits in majority-culture schools. In this regard, schools are not recognized as actively advancing policy and practices in the best interest of Latin@ students or of the Latin@ community. It can be concluded that drawing on community cultural wealth provides strategies for succeeding in majority-culture schools, and can serve as a source of both resistance and motivation for Latina students who are attracted to teaching as transformative work. A related conclusion is that when such supports are not available, and when the power of education, school culture, and school structures are perceived and experienced as maintaining white privilege, racialized hierarchies, and ideologies of meritocracy; Latina students may reject or be pushed out of a teaching career. A further related conclusion is that rural schools in the new Latin@ diaspora that have historical and contemporary anti-immigration views, stable white teacher workforces, white school administrative teams, and white school boards favor teachers from the dominant culture. Building the capacity and agency for Latina teachers to work in rural schools that do not have a track record of embracing diversity and equity as assets can set Latina teachers up for working in isolation, being perceived as outsiders, and only being valued when they adhere to the dominant cultures perceptions of education and schooling.

Unique roles, recruitment, and retention. The third major finding was that all of the participants played valuable roles as Latina teachers in creating equitable and inclusive learning spaces. The fourth finding was that all participants reported that the recruitment of Latinas to the profession of teaching was fraught with challenges due to missed opportunities for strong educational foundations, a lack of Latin@ role models, and the perceived low status and salary of

the teaching profession. They believed that recruitment and retention could be improved by giving greater value to Latina teachers' perspectives, cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. A conclusion that can be drawn from these two findings is that culturally responsive teaching practices and culturally relevant pedagogy add value for Latin@ students and promote Latina teacher retention. A social and institutional commitment to embracing cultural and linguistic diversity can serve students and teachers and lay the foundation for encouraging aspiring Latina teachers. A related conclusion is that restructuring school culture and operational structures for equity provides a framework for elevating the professional status of the teaching profession and building community support for diversifying the teacher workforce. Including a broad base of stakeholders from Latin@ communities will highlight Latina teachers' perspectives, cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Recommendations

This researcher collaborated with the participants to offer recommendations based on the findings, analysis, and conclusions of the present study. The participants' lived experiences form a collective story that demands social change and social justice.

Recommendations for university–school–community partnerships

University stakeholders should

1. Implement a cluster hire of high-quality culturally and linguistically diverse teacher education faculty,
2. Ensure faculty have assignments and interest in supporting university-sponsored Latin@ teacher recruitment and retention projects, and
3. Engage Latina teacher pre-service candidates in faculty-sponsored research and teacher training practicum opportunities that involve student–parent and community engagement.

School stakeholders should

1. Engage elementary school students in peer-to-peer, and student–teacher, and student–student teacher–teacher culture conversations teams that create daily opportunities for cross-group friendships, as well as adult–student discussions on equity, inclusiveness, and justice, with the objective being to set high expectations for each and every student and to establish positive networking relationships;
2. Increase the number and visibility of culturally and linguistically diverse school library books and classroom literature;
3. Create opportunities during the earliest school years for Latina students interested in teaching to learn; practice culturally responsive teaching skills, especially with Latina teachers and Latina student teachers modeling the use of culturally relevant pedagogy; and
4. Engage elementary school and middle school Latina teachers in high-school sponsored college and career events and programing aimed at building capacity and social skills for college success.

Community Stakeholders should

1. Implement rural community immigrant integration initiatives that engage all city, county, and state-sponsored institutions in creating welcoming and inclusive communities, public service agencies, and schools; and
2. Engage strategic stakeholders and leadership from the Latin@ community, specifically Latin@ leaders from faith-based organizations, schools, colleges, and universities in the conceptual and implementation phases of Latin@ teacher recruitment and retention initiatives.

Recommendations for Education Policy Leaders

State education policy makers should

1. Establish state funding for rural school service scholarships for preschool–third grade bilingual and ESOL early learning teacher preparation,
2. Offer certified bilingual teachers working in public preschool programs the same salary schedule and benefits as public K–12 teachers,
3. Establish professional public school teacher salary schedules similar to those of other professional careers, and
4. Pass state- and national-level immigration policies that provide undocumented students access to higher education funding resources, pathways to citizenship, and work.

Recommendations for the Field of Adult Learning

Teacher education instructors should

1. Incorporate *Testimonio* as reflexive critical pedagogy for understanding anti-bias and cultural sensitivity,
2. Implement multiethnic perspectives in teacher-education curriculum design, and
3. Establish veteran and novice teacher communities of practice.

Suggestions for Future Research

This researcher recommends further studies to address the shortage of culturally and linguistically diverse educators, particularly in light of the link between a lack of such educators and the academic achievement gap between students of color and white students. With current rapid changes in the ethnic demographics of the US school-age population, attention to diversifying the teacher workforce remains an important human rights concern. Therefore, the following research should be considered:

1. Based on the limitations of the present study and to correct the researcher's bias, a similar research design with a larger sample of in-service Latina teachers should be conducted to document additional stories. This study should include a focus group to provide additional opportunities for dialogue and to share *testimonios*. This additional method should be used to deepen the collaborative analysis and to shape interpretations;
2. A participatory action research approach should be used to ensure that strategic stakeholders from Latin@ communities are involved in all phases of the research process. Participants' perspectives should be assessed to provide cultural knowledge of how the researcher can become more culturally responsive and culturally competent. Funds of knowledge methods should be used to collect information about the resources and knowledge that Latina teachers bring to their jobs that contribute to their persistence; and
3. Research is needed to further explore the sociohistorical and sociopolitical forces in new Latina diaspora rural communities. These studies should explore how contextual factors impact Latina teacher recruitment and retention. This research should also be undertaken to explore contemporary racism and white privilege, as well as to examine the impact of colorblind policies and practices. An ethnodrama might be used to present the research and bring the *testimonios* to life, thereby stimulating a public dialogue in the local community.

Researchers Reflections

The women in the present study reported experiencing many forms of subordination throughout every step of their educational journey in US majority-culture schools; these forms of subordination took place in their teaching positions, in the lives of their Latin@ students, and in

American society in general. Their stories challenge the educational discourse in the US today, which rarely acknowledges the historical and contemporary impacts of economic, political, and social policy on educational access, opportunity, and outcomes; such a discourse unfairly blames students of color, their families, and their communities for their own inequity (Burciaga & Erbstein, 2010; Orfield, 2013). These women's resistance to the dominant ideologies put forward by powerful institutions—which claim racial neutrality, objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, and equal opportunity—highlights the cultural strengths that women have acquired from pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2006), funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005), and through community cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). This researcher is grateful for the participating women's strength in sharing their stories and in collectively calling for social change and social justice, thereby potentially encouraging aspiring Latinas to enter the teaching profession.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

January __, 2013

Dear _____,

My name is Carla Borovicka and I am beginning dissertation research as part of my doctoral work in adult learning at Lesley University, Cambridge, MA. I would be honored if you would agree to assist me in my research process.

The focus of my study is to learn about Latina teachers' educational experiences, trajectories, and persistence in the teacher workforce. I will be using a *testimonio* interview method to gather teachers' life stories. Sharing your experiences as a teacher would provide a wealth of information for my research. The expected benefit associated with participation in the research study will be the contribution to the field of teacher education.

The dissertation research will include 8-10 interviews with Latina teachers. *Testimonio* interviews will begin in January 2013 and run through February 2013. Interviews will be scheduled at a time and place convenient for the participants, and will last approximately 60 – 90 minutes. All information you share with me will remain confidential and your name and work affiliation will not be shared in any report.

As a thank you for participating in this research, you will receive your choice of the text *Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology* or a gift certificate for a one-year subscription to *Rethinking Schools* magazine. You will be mailed a copy of the text or magazine gift certificate after the conclusion of the project.

Please see the attached Consent to Participate in Research form for more details regarding the project, procedures, participant rights and information security.

Please email me at cborovic@lesley.edu if you are available to participate in this important project. Please let me know by _____. I will contact you to schedule a convenient date to conduct the interview.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you soon.
Carla Borovicka

Contact Information:

Cell: 541-410-3711
Email: cborovic@lesley.edu
Bend, OR

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: Inequities, resistance, and motivations in Latin@ teacher trajectories:
Implications for Latin@ teacher recruitment and retention from a testimonio-based study

University: Lesley University: Ph.D. in Adult Learning
Spring 2013

Introduction:

You are being asked to be a volunteer in a research study to learn about Latina teachers' educational experiences and trajectory and persistence in the teaching profession. The Principal Investigator is Carla Borovicka, doctoral student in the Educational Studies/Adult Learning program at Lesley University, cborovic@lesley.edu, (541) 330-1906 (H), (541) 410-3711 (cell). The faculty supervisor of record is Dr. Judith Cohen, jcohen@lesley.edu (617) 349-8484.

Description and Purpose:

You were selected as a possible participant for this study because you hold an Oregon teaching license, are a primary or secondary school teacher living and working in Central or Eastern Oregon and have self-identified as Latina. The purpose of this study is to document the educational experiences of Latina teachers, their trajectories into the teacher workforce, their role in student outcomes, factors that support their persistence in the profession, and their perspectives on improving the number of well prepared Latina teachers in Oregon K-12 rural school classrooms.

A narrative *testimonio* interview will be used to collect life stories. You will be asked questions about your educational experiences as a representative of a collective reality of Latina teachers in Central and Eastern Oregon. Approximately ten - twelve potential participants are being asked to volunteer for this research study with eight - ten participants expected to enroll in this research. Your volunteer participation in this study will help higher education and K-12 administrators, teachers, parents and community organizations understand the educational experiences of Latina teachers living and teaching in rural schools located in rapidly growing Latina/o communities. This research study is being conducted to inform the investigators dissertation studying the underrepresentation of Latina teachers in Oregon. The study will begin in January 2013 and the researcher may collect data through May 2013.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to:

- Sign your consent form and return it to the investigator.
- Participate in one face-to-face, one-on-one, audio tapped *testimonio* interview – 60-90 minutes. Interviews will be arranged to take place in participants home or work location.
- Complete a demographic data survey at the end of the interview – 10 minutes.
- Review your interview transcript for accuracy. This document will arrive by email - 30 minutes.

- Participate in a follow-up audio-recorded telephone dialogue to confirm the accuracy of your *testimonio*, provide further clarifying details, and participate in analysis of developing themes - 40-60 minutes.
 - Sign and return a second consent form for investigator to quotes or paraphrase from all or any portions of the interview or relevant data you may give to the investigator.
 - Review an email attached draft of the findings – 30 minutes.
 - Email Investigator with your final feedback and or revisions - 20 minutes.
 - Email confirmation that you have received a copy of the findings.
- Your total time commitment to this project would be approximately 4-5 hours.

Risks of Participating in the Study:

There are minimal foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences involved in this study. The Investigator is not Spanish speaking and all written and verbal communication with the Investigator will be in English.

Benefits of Participating in the Study:

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research beyond knowing that your experiences as a teacher have been documented and that you are furthering the understanding of Latina teachers' educational experiences, trajectory, and persistence in the teaching profession.

Compensation to You:

As a thank you for participating in this research study, you will receive your choice of the text *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology* or a one- year subscription to *Rethinking Schools* magazine. You will be mailed a copy of the text or magazine subscription confirmation after the investigator receives your email confirming that you have received a copy of the research findings.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in research is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions. No one at the university you attended or at the school where you currently teach will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity:

All participants' will remain anonymous and choose pseudonyms that will be used on all study records. Records will be kept private and confidential to the extent allowed by law. Your name and other facts that might identify you will not appear when the results are published or publicly presented in any way. The dissertation will be published and accessible to the public. Results from the dissertation may be used for future article publication. Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Transcribed interviews, hand written notes taken during the interview, during telephone conversations or written in the investigators research journal, along with participants' demographic data will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Original face-to-face audio taped interview recordings and audio taped telephone interview recordings will be secured electronically on a password-protected computer. All information you provide will be kept by the investigator and will only be made available, if necessary, while we are working on this study to

the principal investigator Dr. Judith Cohen. After five years, all of the information you provided the investigator will be destroyed.

The researcher will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. The original form will be locked in the researcher's file cabinet for five years. You are encouraged to contact the investigator or the faculty principal investigator supervising the research with any questions or concerns at any time.

Investigator's Signature:

Date	Investigator's Signature	Print Name
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Subject's Signature:

I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose, and that the investigator will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.

Date	Subject's Signature	Print Name
------	---------------------	------------

Investigator:

Carla Borovicka, MS
123 NW St Helens Pl
Bend, OR 97701
(541) 410-3711
cborovic@lesley.edu

Principal Investigator/Senior Advisor:

Judith Cohen, PhD
Lesley University
29 Everett Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 349-8484
jcohen@lesley.edu

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact irb co-chair Terry Keeney, tkeeney@lesley.edu Lesley University, 29 Everett St, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138, telephone: (617) 349-8234.

Appendix C: Sample Selection Criteria

Participant Selection Criteria

Study Title: Inequities, resistance, and motivations in Latin@ teacher trajectories: Implications for Latin@ teacher recruitment and retention from a *testimonio*-based study

Potential research participant:

Thank you for your interest in participating in the research process. There are criteria to participate in the research study. Please read through the criteria and confirm that you meet the following criteria by placing a check mark in the circles that apply:

I verify, I have, or I am:

- One of the following: (a) An active Oregon Teaching license or School Counselor license, (b) Bachelors degree in Child Development, Early Childhood Development, or Early Childhood Education, or (c) appropriate state license for home day school.
- Educator or school counselor in an Oregon preschool, primary, secondary school, or I have retired from teaching in a preschool, primary, or secondary school within the last three years.
- Have been a full-time resident of Central or Eastern Oregon for at least 5 years.
- Self-identify as Chicana, Latina, or Hispanic (U.S native or foreign born)
- Interested in this project

Potential Participant's Signature:

_____	_____	_____
Date	Potential Participant's Signature	Print Name
Address _____		
Telephone number _____		
Email address _____		

Please return this form to Carla Borovicka by February 9, 2013 via email cborovic@lesley.edu
Please contact me if you have questions regarding this form or this project.

Appendix D: Demographic Data Sheet

Participant Demographic Data Survey

Pseudonym _____

Age range (please circle): 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

Place of birth (please circle): US Mexico Other _____

If born in US: 1st generation 2nd generation 3rd generation

US birthplace: City/State _____

Born in other country: Birthplace: State/City _____

Self-selected identifier (please circle):

Chicana | Mexican | Mexican American | Latina | Hispanic | or other country of origin _____

Primary language spoken at home during childhood (please circle): English Spanish
Other _____Primary language currently spoken at home (please circle): English Spanish
Other _____

Other languages spoken _____

Did you participant in English Language Learning instruction as a child? Yes No

Did you participate in English Language Learning instruction as an adult? Yes No
(please circle) number of year: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Did you attend preschool (0-3)? (please circle) Yes No location school _____

Location of Elementary School _____

Location of Middle School _____

High School:

Oregon Public High School: location _____

Oregon Private High School: location _____

GED or High School Equivalence _____

Other High School Type _____ State _____

First institution of higher education (please circle): 2 year 4 year

Institution granting Bachelors degree _____

Major or degree program _____

Institution where you attended teacher preparation program if different from institution granting Bachelors degree _____

Institution granting counseling license _____

Initial license subject area(s) _____ Authorization level(s) _____

Endorsements (please circle): ESOL Bilingual Reading Other _____

Master's Degree Institution attended _____

Master's Degree Program _____

Teach Grant recipient (please circle): yes no

FAFSA or other financial aid or scholarships _____

Current teaching position _____

Number of years teaching full time _____

First-generation college student (please circle): Yes No

Highest education level attained by Mother 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12, AA, BA, MA, PhD/EdD,
Other professional degree _____

Mother's primary occupation _____

Mother's country of origin _____

Highest education level attained by Father 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12, AA, BA, MA, PhD/EdD,
Other professional degree _____

Father's primary occupation _____

Father's country of origin _____

Number of siblings: Sisters _____ Brothers _____

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Name of Interviewee: _____ Date of Interview _____

Introduction of topic, review study procedures, data protection, participants rights

Context Notes:

1. How did you come to be in Oregon?
2. What influenced your decision to enter and persist in the teacher workforce?

RQ1: What had the greatest impact on Latina teachers' educational experiences?

3. Describe your primary school experiences?

- Tell me about your social experiences?

- Tell me more about your interactions with others at your school.

- Who was your teacher?

- How did your teacher treat you?

- Describe any ESL/ESOL experiences?

- What were your responsibilities at school?

- What were your responsibilities at home?

- Tell me about your experiences in your community.

4. How were your school experiences different in Middle School?

-Tell me more about your interactions with others at your school.

-What were your responsibilities at school?

-What were your responsibilities at home?

-What kind of classes did you take?

-Who were your mentors?

5. Describe a time in high school that stands out?

-What were your social experiences or afterschool activities?

-What kinds of classes did you take (AP/Honors)

-When did you begin thinking about going to college?

-What were your perceptions of others expectations for your school success, future?

-Who were your mentors?

-How did you go about the college application process?

RQ2: How do Latina teachers make meaning of their decision to enter and persist in the teaching profession?

6. What were the key events or people who influenced your college choice?

7. What proved to support or hinder that journey?

8. What influenced your decision to major in education and pursue a teaching career?

9. Tell me about the way you dealt with teacher education entry requirements?
10. Describe your experiences in your teacher education program.
11. How did you select the schools where you would apply for teaching jobs?
12. What were your experiences as you interviewed for your first positions?
13. Describe your first teaching job experiences.
14. What made an impact on your decision to continue teaching?
15. How will the shift to Common Core State Standards impact your teaching?

RQ3: What are Latina teachers' perceptions of the role they play in student educational experiences and outcomes?

16. Tell me about a time when you used what you knew about Latin@, Mexican, or Mexican American culture and values to help students in your school?
17. In what ways do you contribute to your students' achievements?
18. How is your school organized?
19. Tell me about your community?

RQ4: What can Latina teachers tell educational leaders about recruitment and retention?

20. How can Latina teachers be encouraged to consider teaching?
21. Tell me about how you saw yourself reflected in your teacher preparation program?
22. What skills, values or knowledge has helped you prepare to teach in your school?
23. Why do you think some Latina teachers decide to leave teaching?
24. What are some suggestions you can provide for strengthening university–school–community partnerships that may benefit teachers, students, and families?